

The Anomaly's Enigma

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The Anomaly's Enigma

by [Helena Hathaway](#)

Summary

Sequel to The Enigma's Anomaly: It's been four years since everything transpired. Gerard knows it's all in the past, but the fear there will never go away. Not ever. Everyone says it's an irrational fear though. That no one's out to get him.

But what if it's not an irrational fear at all?

Notes

Turn back now if you haven't read the first one.

Four Years

Chapter Summary

It's baaaaaaaaaaaaaack!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“It’s been four years since the death of Elliot Banks, Gerard. How does that make you feel?”

I pucker my lips for a long moment and try to come up with my answer, “what can I say that isn’t going to get you to write ‘psychotic lunatic’ on that little pad of yours?”

She looks at me, with a judgmental glare, one I know all too well. I guess it’s better than the one I’ve been getting a lot recently like I actually am insane.

“What do you want me to say? I’m happy about it, okay? I’m happy he’s dead. I don’t know if that makes me a bad person or not, but the man tried to kill me, and my husband, and my brother, and basically everyone else I know,” I tell her. “What more do you want from me? A written confession? I’m glad he’s dead, it made me feel safe for a little while.”

She scribbles something against her pad and I roll my eyes at her, waiting for her to tell me something, anything. Waiting for her to call a cop to have me arrested, or call a hospital to have me committed.

“I don’t think that’s an outrageous reaction at all,” she says. “In fact I think it’s understandable.”

“Well good, because I don’t regret it. That man, Banks, he tried to ruin my life, stitch by stitch, tried to tear me up at my seams, and I don’t for one day regret his death. Not one. If he hadn’t died, I probably would’ve been the one to go, or someone I love, and he was a bad man. He killed people before he tried to kill me, and if he’d been allowed to go on, he’d have killed more people, so no, I don’t regret his death,” I say.

I look around the office around me, wanting to look anywhere but at her. I don’t want to be here. Frank made me. He thinks I’m going crazy or something. No one believes me. I wish they did.

I look at the walls, which are beige with a high wooden trim against the bottom. There’s certificates on the wall behind her. I haven’t bothered to learn her name. She’s just another faceless therapist.

One of the certificates behind her head is crooked and it’s bothering me, because I want to go over there and straighten the frame. She’s got the bland Ikea-was-having-a-sale couch, and an equally as mundane chair for herself. Her desk looks like she paid too much for it though. Like she’s trying too hard to look sophisticated.

I’m most attracted to the door behind her, the one I’m itching to go through to leave this office.

“But four years later, Gerard, how do you feel about what’s happened?”

“Well that’s why I’m here isn’t it?” I ask, “I’ve told you about four years ago, and you no doubt read about it in the news when it happened, I made international headlines! I became famous because of this, if you can call it fame. I

hate that though. I'm an artist, not a guy who was shot at, and I don't want it this way, but what are you going to do?"

"But that's not why you're here," she says.

I sigh, looking down at the ground, because this is the part I'm not looking forward to. I hate people thinking I'm messed up by this, but I guess, if I wasn't so sure, I'd understand it too.

"No that's not why," I say. "I've been having some 'waking dreams', if that's what you want to call them, but they're not dreams. They're real. Saying they're dreams is ignorant."

"You know in some cases, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder can take years to start showing any effects," she says and I groan.

"I don't have PTSD, okay? I've just been a little jittery recently, because someone's lurking around in my life, searching for some way to hurt me, and I don't know who."

"And why do you say that? Why do you think someone's following you?"

"Because they are!"

"Why would someone be following you?"

"They just are."

"You're delusional. No one wants to hurt you," she says, "It's a normal reaction. Seeing his face, remembering what happened."

"I'm not seeing Banks' face! This isn't remembering what happened, okay? I haven't had any fucking flashbacks or anything. This isn't my past, this is now. This is all really happening to me, and no one will believe me," I say, shaking my head.

"Well can you blame them?"

"Yes! Yes I can. My own husband doesn't even think I'm in my right mind, but I am. I know this is all happening. It's all happening again. This is the dawn before the storm, but the storm is sure as hell coming," I say.

"You're not a meteorologist, Gerard," she says sadly, "your brain is trying to trick you into thinking it's happening again when in reality you're just not over what happened last time."

"That's not true!"

"Oh yeah?" she says, "Then let's talk about what happened recently. What triggered all of this fear."

"He didn't trigger it," Gerard says, "he just made me more aware of it."

"Talk about it."

"I would really rather not," I say.

"Gerard," she says looking at me sternly from the end of her glasses. She strangely reminds me of my mother, and I don't know why.

"What? It's not like you deserve to know my deepest darkest secrets about this. It's been wigging me out enough as it is, okay?" I say, feeling defensive.

"We're not going to get anywhere if you don't talk to me about it," she says.

"Fine with me," I say, and look down at the floor. It's not my fault this has been haunting me, but I can't live it down now. No one understands though.

I'm just over reacting. That's what they keep telling me. Side effect from what ensued four years ago. It's been a long time since the thing with Banks, and some part of me has known it's never going to stop replaying in my head, but this is different. That's not what this is.

I am still afraid of Banks, sure. Since he died, I've had a couple nightmares about him, but those were all years ago. I'm happy now. I have a great life. My husband, Frank, is perfect. My brother is a Neanderthal as ever, but I still like the guy. I have a great job. Nothing should be wrong, because my life is perfect, but someone is trying to interfere. Someone wants me hurt or dead, or they want Frank hurt or dead, and I'm the *only* one who sees it.

"Gerard, you're going to have to come to terms with this eventually. He's out of jail. That's a fact."

"He didn't even stop Banks from trying to kill me. I wasn't the best person in the world to him, but he tried to kill me, so yeah, that has me a little freaked out, I'm sorry. That's different though. That's me being wary of him, this is me realizing someone, maybe him, wants me dead."

"Gerard, you have the restraining order, he's on parole--"

"So what? Derek Fischer is out of jail, and I'm the reason he was put in there, so yeah, I'm scared of him. I'll own up to it. He scares me. What else do you expect from me, huh? He's out of jail, and I'm the reason he was in there," I say.

“You know that it’s completely irrational to think that he’s going to be coming after you. He’s not that stupid. He’d risk his parole, and he’d be the first suspect if anything happens to anyone near you,” she says.

“Yeah a lot of fucking comfort that gives me. I had to flee the city, and at one point, the goddamn state, running away from Banks and his people. His people tried to kill me. Fischer tried to kill me. Some of them were guns for hire, I get that,” sort of like my husband, but I won’t say that, “but some of them are still out for blood. Fischer is out, and what if he decides to finish what Banks started?”

“The point I’m trying to make Gerard, is that we both know what’s triggered these intrusive memories,” she says, “it’s because you’re afraid Derek Fischer wants to carry out Banks’ plan to have you killed.”

“How do you know he doesn’t?” I scoff, letting her suggestion that this is all in my head roll off of me just this once.

“Maybe he does hold some sort of grudge, but we both know that this man was only ever an associate of a small degree. He wasn’t the brains of any of this, he’s not going to look for you.”

“He might, but maybe it’s not him,” I say.

“But even if he does find you, or anyone else for that matter, you’re well protected, Gerard. It’s been four years, you’re going to have to accept that the past isn’t out there to kill you.”

“It was once, wasn’t it? I wrote a comic book character who I just so happened to base off of a man called Banks, who was from my past, and that guy ended up almost ruining my

life. Who says it won't happen again?" I ask. "I don't trust the police, okay? I don't. When this all came around, they wouldn't arrest Banks. He was too powerful. He had connections. There was a murderer in the police force who wanted to kill me. I remember him, trust me. Officer Roland tried to kill the man I love. He threw him in the ocean for god's sake. Banks was untouchable. The police aren't airtight. Poison can make it through the ranks."

"This doesn't have to ruin your life though, Gerard. You've made a name for yourself, sure some of that may have come from this incident, but you have. You've got a good life now, and you can't tell me you want to let it all be cast into shadow by this fear," she says.

"I don't want to talk about him anymore," I say, looking away, and folding my hands together in front of me. "I think about him enough."

"Gerard, we both know that Derek Fischer's release has invoked some sort of post-traumatic fear in you, and if you're not going to let yourself accept that, you're not going to get past this."

"I had a hard time with this, okay? Four years ago was the scariest part of my life ever, I know it was, but it's happening all over again. I don't think I'm being irrational about this, because I know someone wants to get me. I think someone wants to hurt me because of what happened," I say clearly.

"Bottom line, do you believe Derek Fischer, you're ex-publisher, is out to get you?"

"I don't know. I don't know if it's him. There are other people it could be. How do we know we got all of Banks associates? There could still be unknown people who were

in on it but never got caught, and there's no way to know for sure."

"Why is it happening now then, Gerard? Why the convenient timing? Derek Fischer has just been released from jail, spooking you, why would it be happening now? Why not four years ago?"

"Don't you get it? They waited for him! They've been waiting four years so that Derek Fischer would leave so that they could come after me and blame it all on him. Everyone would suspect him, it's perfect. Or maybe it is him and he doesn't care about the consequences. All I know is that I'm going to die soon if people don't start listening. I'm not crazy, I'm just scared," I tell her.

I look at her already knowing that she's about to tell me something I already know is wrong. I feel her disbelief in vibrations moving through me before it's even left her tongue.

"What I think is happening is that this fear is a figment of your imagination. Derek Fischer being released from prison has unburied all the fears you had four years ago, and you're brain is making things up to help you get through it. Your brain is tricking you into thinking this is real when it's not."

"You're wrong. I have felt this, it's real, and it's not fake. Someone is out there, and they want to hurt me or someone I love. It's not post-traumatic or anything, okay? This is ongoing-traumatic. This is happening again. I can sense it."

"Oh and how? A gut instinct?"

"Yes!" I say, looking at her angrily, because she doesn't understand. She's taking me as a joke, writing me off as

some maniac with invisible demons haunting him, but I know it's happening again. I know it. I've felt the signs of it. I've had more people looking at me, felt people watching me.

"Gerard, having a gut instinct doesn't mean anything."

"How can you know that?" I ask, "You don't know what it's like. This isn't something that can all be in my head. This is real. This is happening around me and I know it."

"Sometimes our dreams can seem real-"

"No!"

"Alright, then tell me what these senses are? Explain the signs that have been presenting themselves to you?"

"I've been getting these creepy fan mail letters. I get a lot of that stuff, okay, and it's usually fine, the occasional nut-job, but these are all the same. All the same one's with the same message on each. 'Not over yet.' Not over yet! What the hell else could that mean?"

"Gerard, you're a celebrity. You write a famous comic, you have to expect things like this," she says, looking at me like I'm a child.

"Then there's the feeling that someone's tailing me. Following me. I don't know who, but I've been hearing them. Looking behind me only to realize it's too late."

"I really think you should consider the idea that maybe you didn't entirely get over that fear. Maybe that's why it's taken four years for you to start showing these signs. Your brain's been trying to block it out for a long time, but

eventually, it had to give in. It couldn't last forever, this running away from that feeling."

I sigh long and hard, looking up at the ceiling out of annoyance, "Alright I'll amuse you for a moment. Entertain your very wrong idea that this is all in my head. You're wrong, but suppose you're right though. Why couldn't I build a wall to this forever?

"Because that's not exactly how life works, Gerard," she says, looking at me. Her eyes are no longer on the pad in front of her, and she's looking at me too sympathetically. I hate it when they look sympathetic. They don't actually know what it is they're giving advice on, they just like to make you think they do. There's no empathy there, no one can just understand what it's like to have been in my shoes.

I have been shot at a fair number of times. I have been shot at by the guy who later I ended up marrying, that was mostly unintentional. He fell in love with me, I fell in love with him, it's a long story. I've seen my brother being thrown in jail for a crime he didn't commit, and I've seen my boyfriend kidnapped right out from under me. It was my fault too. All of those things were my fault. I have watched the person I love die, like legitimately die, he was dead for like 29 seconds. I've had my life uprooted, and been thrown into the middle of nowhere so that I wouldn't be killed. I've been chased off of a road, shot at in the middle of a forest, assisted in the hotwiring and theft of a car, and let my brother get kidnapped because of me. Then my boyfriend tied me to a bed, and it got a little messy for a while, and I thought it all got better. Living a life like that is not easy though. Trust me. You can't run from that kind of a past. It's catching up to me, I'm positive of that.

"You don't know me but you think you do," I say.

“Well who are you then?”

“I’m a guy who just wants to be happy with his life. I want to go home, and I want to be happy with my favorite person in the entire world. I want to just have my life with Frank and forget about what happened before. I just wish I didn’t have to worry that someone wants to kill me, but I don’t get that luxury. I haven’t really had it for four years,” I say, feeling my whole face drop and my body shake.

“I don’t know what to tell you, Gerard,” she says, “you won’t listen to me, but I know that there’s nothing to be afraid of.”

“Yeah?” I ask, standing up, because I am sick of being ridiculed like this by her, “you say that in two weeks when you’re watching the news and you hear them report that I’m dead.”

Chapter End Notes

I spent so long on this. Too long. I scratched this almost five times, at one point the story was 30,000 words long, but it didn’t work so I threw the whole thing out. Finally, here it is. A different story than the one I’d intended to tell, but it’s better so sorry for the wait. Not going to be as long as the first one, I’ll guarantee that much.

Pity is the Worst

Chapter Summary

Gerard doesn't like the way Frank is worried for him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Gerard-”

“You know what, save it,” I say, walking right past him.

“I’m worried about you. What can I say?” Frank asks.

“Well ideally, you wouldn’t be treating me like a mental patient. Like someone who got out of the straightjacket yesterday,” I say, not looking at him, because I don’t really want to right now.

“Gerard, you’ve got to understand how this looks,” Frank pleads.

“Yes. I understand how it looks. I understand that, on the outside, I do sound a bit insane. I get that. I can acknowledge that, but what I don’t understand is why you won’t even float the possibility that I am right,” I say, my voice sounds a lot angrier than I had been trying. I just can’t take the edge out of it, like I need to punch something.

This whole office is incredibly stuffy and I’m not the least bit remorseful about escaping it. The air outside is hot and muggy, probably because it’s the middle of summer and it just rained. The sky is cloudy and an iron-gray, but I like it. I always like overcast days better than the days where the

sun is high and shining. There's something comfortable about it this color.

"Gerard, are you mad at me?" Frank asks as he exits the building behind me.

"A little, yeah," I say, in a tone that doesn't make it sound like it's a little, but rather a lot.

"I'm sorry. Gerard, you and I both know how this sounds, okay?" Frank says, and I decline to answer him until we're in the car.

"Frank, I'm not going crazy. I'm not paranoid. I'm perfectly sane. I hate that you're demeaning me. That you won't even look at me anymore without seeing some scared little guy afraid of the boogieman. I may sound a little ridiculous, but the truth sometimes just is that way, Frank."

"But Gerard-"

"Don't even do it, I have heard every single one of your accusations, Frank. Yeah, this is crazy, so what? Frank, I married a guy who tried to kill me. That's crazy as fuck too. That's crazier than this is when you think about it. Someone who tried to kill me multiple times ended up falling in love with me. That's stupid, Frank. No one would believe that if it didn't happen. I'll buy the story where the guy, who was sent to prison *because of me*, is after me. That's basic. That's not a hard story to believe. I've seen that movie."

Frank sighs and leans his head against the window of the passenger's side door. I look over at him, waiting for him to call me a lunatic or something. He hasn't said that word, or one similar it, to me outright during this whole debacle, but it's only sooner or later. I know what he thinks of me.

"I know you think you know what's going on, Gerard. I know you're scared, and I don't think that's an extreme response to all that's happened to us, but it has been four years. Four years is a long time, Gerard. Why wouldn't it have been three years ago? Or three and a half?"

"We have been over this. It's so as not to arouse suspicion! Or maybe it's because, I don't know, Derek Fischer is out of jail?" I say.

Frank just sighs and looks out the window. When I look up out of the window I see the small droplets on the glass indicating that it's started drizzling, but it isn't very hard yet. It makes the glass look like it's got a thousand little holes in it.

"Look, we both know my past isn't exactly elegant or clean. It's not an ideal story to tell, but I've learned from it, and I learned a lot of things about it. One thing I know is how to tell if someone is following me or stalking me. That's not something I'm unfamiliar with. I know what it's like to follow someone, so I know how to sense it. I know how to assess a threat as well, and I haven't seen any threats that would have me quaking in my boots," Frank says, sighing and looking at me sadly through the reflection in the window, "You need to be able to distinguish the difference between an empty threat and loaded words."

"I know the difference," I say, biting sharply on the syllables, "it's you who isn't paying any attention."

I don't give Frank the option to start talking anymore before I turn the keys and start the ignition, interrupting whatever he was about to say. This is the same Trans Am that we bought when we were on the run. I'm a sentimentalist, what can I say?

"You're mad at me," Frank says softly as I pull the car onto the road.

"Yeah," I say.

"I'm sorry," he says.

"Sorry? I want you to believe me, not be sorry for me."

"But I don't believe you, Gerard, that's the problem," Frank says.

"And that's why I'm mad at you," I say, "What is it going to take for you to get that we're in danger?"

"Gerard, getting weird letters in fan mail isn't a sign that someone wants you dead."

"Not over yet? Frank, this is a letter I got in the post by some freak, not the opening number of A Very Potter Sequel. It's not something to just laugh off. Someone wants us dead," I tell him.

"Say that all you want, Gerard," Frank replies, shaking his head, "that doesn't mean it's real."

"That doesn't make it fiction either," I tell him, and I can't deny that, yeah, I'm pissed at him. No one will even consider the fact that I'm not making this all up in my head. Not my brother, or Frank, or the three therapists I've been forced to go to because everyone's worried about me. Frank and I have somewhat of a dislike for cops, but I've even gone to them, but I have no proof. For any regular person having really creepy letters in their mail is a big deal, but no, just because I'm me, means that it's nothing big. Not a big deal.

"I want to be able to convince you that you're okay, because I'm afraid that you're losing the plot. I don't think it's a bad thing to be worried about you," Frank says.

"I'm not a danger to myself, Frank. You should know that. It's everyone around me who's a danger, because they don't believe what's happening. I'm fucking terrified, alright? I know what's gonna happen. We've only got a little bit of time left before it happens again. The guns, the running, the pain, the death, I don't want this all to happen again. I want to be able to convince *you* that we're *not* okay."

"How are you going to do that?" Frank sighs.

"I'm going to give it time, and hope that the first attack doesn't end disastrously. Yours failed, you completely missed me, so maybe it'll happen again."

"Why would they warn you with these letters of what's about to happen?" Frank questions.

"There's one thing I will never forget about Banks and that's that he liked to play with his food. I suspect his allies, especially the ones who hold the biggest grudges, are similar in that respect. This is all about making me scared, or making us scared. They want me to know about it beforehand so that I die with fear, build it up, make it hurt."

"Gerard, are you sure that this isn't in your head? I want you to know that I have to fear that this is you trying to, I don't know, escape from your life or something. Escape from me? The last thing I want is for you to be making up this entire thing as an excuse because you're sick of me," Frank says.

"Why would I be sick of you? I'm angry at you, sure," I say, and I pull forward into the parking lot of our apartment,

“but that doesn’t make me sick of you. Why would you think that?”

“Because you’re reacting to the past like it’s coming back to get you, and that’s not something that someone who’s okay does. You aren’t acting like yourself, and I’m sorry, but I do have to assume that it might be because of me. That’s the last thing I want, but maybe you’re projecting.”

“Frank, I love you, but right now, I don’t want to be around you. You’re trying to convince me I’m wrong about something I know I’m not wrong about. I know that sometime soon, we’re going to be relying on each other to stay alive the same way we did four years ago, and I just have to hope that this time we’ll be as lucky as we were last time,” I say.

The car stops and I take the keys, with the sound of them clinking against each other the only noise within the car. Outside, the rain is starting to pour a little more and a little faster so we’re going to have to sprint for the door.

“Gerard,” Frank says, “I’m not willing to believe you. I’m just not. But if you feel strongly about this, then I’ll do my best to act as though we are in danger, okay? If it’ll ease you’re worry, we’ll stay away from windows for a while. We’ll try not to linger outside. Things like that, okay? I’ll do whatever I have to do to make you feel safe, no matter how much I may believe it to be unnecessary.”

“Is that a promise?” I ask, turning to look at Frank.

“It is. It’s all I can offer you. I’m not going to lie to you, but I don’t want you to be angry about me, or scared for me, so I’ll do whatever I have to, like I said. I love you, and I’m concerned about you, but that doesn’t take away from the fact that I do love you.”

I sigh and look down at the steering wheel, “there is literally no feeling worse than the one where no one believes you. It’s killing me. That look of utter pity people give me when they think I’ve lost my marbles. I thought I’d get used to it by now. When it’s you giving me that look though, it’s a million times worse.”

I push open the door of the car, and it is so fitting that the world is pouring rain down on me. Of course it is. What else would it be doing while everyone around me looks down at me. I can handle a few strangers, therapists, policeman, even my brother, but when it’s Frank who’s pitying me, worrying for my mental health, that’s not something I can handle. That’s just too much.

Chapter End Notes

It honestly feels so good to be writing this again, you have no idea.

Still Love You

Chapter Summary

Fluff is important.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Hey Gerard,” Frank calls.

I let out a long sigh and look over at him, “What?”

“Okay so you just sighed deeply, and now I’m getting kind of worried,” Frank says, looking concerned.

“Oh that’s nice to know. A long sigh means more to you than creepy threats in the mail. Got it. It’s nice to know that you have your fucking priorities straight,” I say, putting down the box I’m holding. I look down at it for a second and decide I don’t want to make dinner. I don’t want to make enough food for both of us when Frank isn’t listening to a word I say. He can do it by himself.

Frank starts talking but I cut him off, “Frank, if my sighing is what really bothers you, I’ll let you have fun making your own food.”

I walk over to the front door and wiggle into my shoes, which are admittedly too old and falling apart as it is. I hear him watching me which doesn’t seem possibly but I know it’s true.

“Gerard, what are you doing?” Frank asks, standing up to walk over to me.

"I'm getting away from you so that I don't fucking punch you in the face," I say. "I need some time to clear my head, and having you look at me skeptically like that for three hours isn't going to do the trick. I just need to be by myself, okay?"

"So you're *really* mad at me?"

"I'm mad at you for being too stupid to realize that we're both going to be dead soon if we don't fucking do something about it. I'm mad at you because I've never once lied to you about something this important, and you won't believe me when I tell you about this. I'm mad at you because no one believes me and I feel like I'm suffocating in this. Yeah, I'm mad at you, but you've given me every reason to be."

Frank groans and tries to stand up to stop me, but I just send him a glare and he stops.

"Gerard, I don't want you to be mad at me!"

"Whoops," I say, pulling the door open and walking away. More like escaping.

Before I close the door I look back into the apartment and say, "oh and if I don't make it back sometime before tonight, than I've probably been shot in the head."

~*~*~*~

It's getting late when I get back, but I let the time get away from me. When I walk back up to the apartment I glance behind me every few seconds. It's a nervous habit I've picked up recently. I finally reach our apartment, and look down the hall to make sure it's empty. I open the door

quickly and let out a sigh of relief when I step into the place.

“Frank?” I ask when I enter the apartment. It’s dark and I can’t see very far into the room. We usually don’t turn the lights off though. We just forget, so I wonder why Frank remembered today.

I hear him mumble and I look around to see where he is.

“Frank?” I ask again.

“What?” Frank says more intelligibly. I look over to where his voice came from and turn the kitchen light on. I don’t actually see him but at least I can see the room around me now. I walk forward a little bit to see Frank lying on the couch. I look down at him when I get closer to see that he’s wrapped himself up in a blanket and even gotten himself a pillow. That suggests to me that he didn’t just fall asleep on the couch after watching a movie, but rather that it was a premeditated decision.

“Frank? What’re you doing?” I ask and lean over the couch to look at him. I don’t know how to feel yet, because I’m not sure I know what’s going on.

“Humph, sleeping,” he says.

“Why are you on the couch?” I ask him.

“‘Cause you’re mad at me,” Frank replies, and rolls over to face the other way so he’s looking at the back of the couch, but not at me since his head is angled downwards.

“Why are you on the couch though?”

Frank grumbles something and all I can make out is “sorry.” I sigh, looking down at him, because he’s really cute, and I’m not so mad at him that I want him to sleep on the couch.

“Frank, c’mon,” I say, walking around the couch and intending to pull him up.

“No,” Frank says and he wiggles my hand off of his shoulder when I try to get him up.

“Frank, you don’t need to sleep on the couch, it’s fine.”

Frank just grumbles and settles even more so in the couch. He doesn’t take up very much of it actually, his legs are too short to hang off the other end.

I just sigh, and decide that if Frank won’t relent, then I won’t try to convince him. I walk away from Frank on the couch, turning the kitchen light off behind me.

Ten minutes later I’m trying to fall asleep in bed, but I keep looking over and seeing Frank’s empty spot is making me lonely. He’s not there and I miss him. He’s just so close though, but he’s not there and it doesn’t make any sense.

I decide to ignore the coldness of the bed for a few minutes longer. It just doesn’t feel right without him there though, especially knowing how close he is. I look up at the ceiling and try to convince myself to let it go, but I can’t. Eventually, I stand up and walk slowly out of the room, leaving the door open behind me.

My eyes have adjusted to the dark a little better this time when I enter the living room and see Frank, still in a lump on the couch right where I left him.

“Frank, get up,” I say, but Frank doesn’t show any sign that he heard me, or he just doesn’t care. “Frank!”

He lifts his head up slightly to look over at me, before it falls back and he’s trying to get back to sleep.

“Alright,” I say, shaking my head, “if you’re going to be like that.”

I walk over to the couch and push him further against it.

“Okay Frank, scoot over,” I say, and clamber onto the couch behind him. Frank’s usually the little spoon anyway, so he’s facing away which is a good angle for me to just press up behind him and put my arm around him.

“Gerard!” he whines, trying to readjust himself.

“No. I’m not going away, dumbass,” I scowl, “I still love you, Frank, even if I am mad at you.”

Frank squirms for a minute before giving up, because we can both tell how tired he is, and he looks damn comfortable right now anyway. Instead, Frank just grabs my hand and repositions it on his stomach before sticking his head back into the pillow.

He’s usually pretty pliant when he’s sleepy. I think it’s cute. I always have. He just gets all honest and clingy when it starts getting late.

I kiss the back of his neck, and I hear him exhale softly like he’s happy I’m here. There’s no other times where I love Frank more than when we’re just not doing anything. I don’t know why, I just really like that about us. It’s not that I don’t like hearing him talk, or doing things with him, but there’s something about just relaxing that’s nice. We don’t

always have to be doing *something* to enjoy each other's company. Frank is special because he's the only person in the world who I can just sit and be quiet with, without feeling uncomfortable or feeling the need to fill the silence with conversation.

That kind of thing isn't always easy to come by, because there are some people where not talking is just really awkward, and I guess trying to get to sleep is a different thing to just not talking, but there's no one else I'd let fall asleep on me. I don't want someone else pressed up against me whose body is fairly warm and may make me get too overheated under the blankets. That's just Frank. He's the only person I'd be willing to cuddle with even if it makes me uncomfortable. I love him and I don't fucking care if I'm mad at him, because I still love him.

I don't know if I'm going to be losing him sometimes soon. I might, and that's a scary thing, so I'm not going to let a silly thing like anger stop me from holding him if I might not get to in the future. I'm still hoping I'll be able to convince him that someone wants us dead before it happens, but at the rate I'm going, it's not going to happen.

I'm fairly sure I fall asleep but it's so hard to tell when you're asleep while you're actually asleep. The point is that I'm fairly sure I fall asleep until about three hours later, when I think I fall on the floor. I'm fairly sure that's what happened, because the next thing I know I'm looking up at the ceiling from the hard floor. I'd taken one of the blankets with me, and when I look around me, I see the couch about a foot away.

Frank's head pops up from above me and he looks worried, "sorry, fuck, I'm so sorry Gerard."

“What?”

“I think I elbowed you,” he says, “Hold on.”

“What are you...?” I start but then Frank topples down next to me, nearly kneeing me in the stomach, but his aim was good and luckily he didn’t crush me.

“Now we’re even,” Frank says.

“What time is it?” I ask, because I’m still tired.

“Time to go back to sleep,” He says and reaches up to grab something. I watch him pull the pillow off the couch and then a blanket. I don’t really question him, I just let him do whatever, because I’m tired and I don’t want to think.

Frank frowns and sighs, before pulling himself into a sitting position on the floor. I grumble something that even I can’t make out, and then pull myself up with him.

“Let’s go to bed,” I say before standing up carefully and grabbing Frank once I’m on my feet. Frank’s feet almost fall out from under him but I grab him before he falls.

We’re essentially zombies as we walk down the hall and collapse into bed. It’s more comfortable though. Frank just grabs ahold of me and I think he’s already asleep. I assume he must be, and I try to make out his form in the dark room.

“I’m sorry, Gerard,” Frank says quietly. I hadn’t expected him to talk, as I had thought he was asleep but evidently not.

I don’t reply, because I don’t know what to say. I can’t really forgive him while he doesn’t believe me, even if I want to. I’m not sure whether I do or not.

“Explain it to me, kay?” Frank asks, “tomorrow morning. Tell me why you think we’re in danger.”

“Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Telepathic hugs for those who comment (Oh my god Helena, you're such a comment whore! Yep. True.)

Hopefully My Chapter Titles Will Get More Sarcastic As The Opportunities Present Themselves

Chapter Summary

Colors are important.

Chapter Notes



Not sure how I feel about this cover art actually.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I'm still tired when Frank wakes me up sometime around noon. Apparently sleeping in all day isn't a smart thing to do

while I've got a few pages due. I try to protest waking up, but I do so anyway, because Frank's very convincing. I'm certain that he sold his soul for that pair of puppy dog eyes. God I hate how good he is at getting me to do things. I'd probably let Frank steal my wallet if he said please and thank you. Now granted he doesn't need to ask, he's a good pickpocket. I know because sometimes he steals my phone just to piss me off.

"Nah, don't worry about lunch, I'll make it," Frank says, when I try to offer. Probably a good idea, I'm way behind on my work.

About twenty minutes later, Frank hands me a plate with a poorly made grilled cheese and sits down across from me.

"So how many letters have you got, and have you kept all of them?" Frank asks, delving right into the conversation.

"Um, I've gotten, to the best of my knowledge, six, though I could have missed one. They have all come over the course of about a month. I didn't notice any real correlation between them until the third, but I kept all of them."

"Could you get them for me?" Frank asks.

"Yeah, hold on," I say, and stand up to go find the folder I put them in on the living room table. I put them all in a folder separate from the usual stuff, and, looking back on it, I see now that I shouldn't have pawed them, because if there had been any fingerprints, I've totally botched them, but it's too late to change that now. I grab the folder that they're all in, and take it over to where Frank is sitting.

I set it down in front of him and Frank looks at me, silently asking permission to look through them. I nod and Frank takes out the letters, and starts looking through them. The

room becomes quiet as Frank looks at them, and I watch him patiently, hoping that he might finally believe me.

“How were these addressed?” Frank asks.

“They’re all one piece of paper, just look on the back,” I say. The message is written on the paper, which has been folded into the shape of an envelope and was then taped off. On each there’s only three words, other than the address, and those words are ‘Not over yet.’ The words look like they were typed, curiously, with a type writer. Both the address and the message.

All six are different colors from the rest, two different shades of blue, two different shades of purple, one pink, and one golden yellow color. I feel like the gold one has some sort of significance over the others because it’s a more metallic color, but maybe the person who wrote them was just stealing from his daughter’s arts and crafts supplies. I don’t know, I just know that the gold one kind of sticks out.

“Okay so, six different colors,” Frank says, “do you happen to remember what order they came in?”

I frown and look at them all splayed out in front of Frank, trying to remember.

“I don’t know, I think so. Why?”

“Just curious,” Frank says, “maybe they’ll show some sort of meaning if you put them in order.”

“But they’re all the same,” I say.

“No,” Frank says, “they’re different colors.”

“Does the color of the message hold any significance?” I ask, because I’ve just been viewing them as pieces of paper. I figured whoever sent them just liked the colors, but maybe the gold one is different. I don’t know really, I’m not good at puzzle solving. Frank’s pretty good at it, he’s a menace to watch National Treasure with. He’s good at solving the clues and blurts out the answers before Nicholas Cage does.

“Just, try to put them in order for me please,” Frank asks.

I shrug and then look over them. I’m positive that the first one I got was the lighter purple, so I put that one closest to me, and then sort out the rest of them the way I think they were sent. In order, I spread them out vertically in front of Frank with the light purple first, the dark blue second, the dark purple third, the pink fourth, the gold fifth and the light blue last.

“Now, are you sure this is correct?” Frank asks.

“Um, not really,” I admit, “I can tell you for sure that the first and last are right, but the four in the middle might be wrong.”

“Hmm,” Frank says, “hold on just a second.”

I watch Frank as he stands up and goes over to the counter. He shuffles through a drawer for a second before coming back with a pad of paper and a pencil.

“What are you doing?” I ask him.

“You’ve caught my interest,” Frank says, “I like a good puzzle, and there’s something really off about the fact that their all different colors.”

“What do you mean?”

Frank sighs, “Well, they’re all the same. All completely the same. Same size of paper, same font on the paper, which is clearly meant to look like it’s been written on a typewriter, but you can tell from the way that it’s pressed so precisely into the page that it was printed from a computer. Then there’s the placement of the message and the address. They’re all aligned on the same part of the page, right in the middle with the address being on the exact opposite side of the page, but the same formatting. For all intense and purposes, each one is identical. So why are they different colors?”

“Because making them different colors means that they’re easier to distinguish? Or to put in the order to which they arrived?”

“You’re thinking about it like the colors weren’t precognitive, but I think they were. I think they definitely were. I think that there’s a reason you have six different colors, and there’s another reason why they came in the order they did. So, technically, yes. They’re colored to make them easier to distinguish, but not in the way you’re thinking.”

“It’s a puzzle?” I ask.

“Very well may be.”

“Okay, so what’s the message?” I ask him.

Frank starts writing things down in his notebook and says, “That’s what we’re going to figure out now with any luck.”

I nod and look down at what he’s writing. He’s making a table with six rows, and he’s written the simple name of the

color on each.

“So we’re sure that the light purple was first, and that the light blue was last?”

“Yes,” I say.

“Okay, well let’s start with the ones that are obvious,” Frank says, “look at this gold one. I don’t think there’s any color that this could be other than gold. It’s gold. That’s just what color it is. Do you agree?”

“Um, I mean, I guess?”

“Great,” Frank says, “Now Gerard, what color would you say this first one is. The light purple.”

“I’d say it’s light purple,” I reply, totally not getting what he’s trying to do.

“No, specifically. Pretend you’re painting the walls in your house and want to get just the right color. Tell me what you’re going to tell the guy at Sherwin-Williams when he asks what paint color you’re looking for.”

“Um, I don’t know. Plum?”

“No, I think there’s a little too much grey in the color for it to be plum. I’m thinking... mauve. Grape. Eggplant. Raisin.”

“Okay,” I say, nodding along even though I have no idea what he’s talking about, “so it’s a greyish lightish purple.”

“Exactly,” Frank says, “now let’s look at the last one. Let’s look at this bright blue. What do you think that color is?”

“I don’t know, there’s a lot of shades of blue. Just spit-balling I’d say azure, sapphire, cerulean, cobalt, aqua,

maybe it's denim or true blue."

Frank nods and writes down all the blues I just mentioned. I look at his pad to see that he wrote down all the different shades of purple we had as well. He's seriously lost me, but I'll go with it for now while it looks like I might be able to convince him.

"Right so next, we'll go in order with the ones we're not sure of the order with. We still don't know if the gold is in the right spot, but I'm pretty sure we have the right word for that color. It's gold. Plain and simple. So next in your order we have the dark blue."

"I'd say it's navy blue," I say.

"You know what, I was going to say the exact same thing. It doesn't seem to me like that can be anything but navy blue," Frank looks energetic that we agreed on the blue, and moves on to the next one. He comes to the decision that it's either indigo or violet. To be honest, I work with colors all day, and I don't know the difference between half of these.

"This last one we have is pink. I'm thinking fuchsia, or jam, or rose. Red-violet possibly."

"Hot pink?" I suggest.

"It's too mellow to be hot pink," Frank says, "it's more mundane than that, but it's still bright."

"It's a little like the plum color," I point out.

"True," Frank says. "Give me a second, I'm going to get my laptop."

“Why?” I ask him.

“I’m going to google specific colors to see if we can get a match.”

I just shrug and watch him grab his computer from where he left it in the living room. I finish eating my food and then push the plate away. I’m too caught up in Frank’s little game to keep drawing though so I wait for him to come back.

After Frank logs on he places the computer between the two of us so that I can see the screen. I watch him quickly type ‘different shades of purple,’ and hope to god that something in his head knows what it’s doing. I don’t understand this in the slightest.

Frank grabs the paper and holds it up to a swatch of colors on an interior design website.

“Based on this, I think we can rule out mauve and grape,” Frank says crossing off the colors on his list. “That leaves us with plum, eggplant, and raisin.”

“Maybe this guy has a lot of passion for fruit?” I ask.

“Be serious here, Gerard,” Frank says. I hadn’t realized I wasn’t being serious, but I look down and nod when he says that. Frank’s really into this whole ‘find the right word for the color’ game. I’m just lost.

“Now let’s look at the last color we have,” Frank says, “to me, true blue, azure, and brandeis are all the exact same color, and they match this letter.”

“They are the same color,” I groan, “why is there three different names for the same fucking color? Why can’t

people just call it blue?”

“I don’t know,” Frank shrugs, “but they all look the same to me.”

A few minutes later, we come to the conclusion that the color we think is navy blue is definitely navy blue, because it can’t be anything else. The dark purple Frank decides is indigo, and the pink one we agree is either fuchsia or magenta. We realize that different websites all have different ideas for what some colors are and what they aren’t. On one website, the color that claims to be fuchsia looks nothing like the fuchsia of another site.

“Give me just a minute,” Frank says and he looks down at his notebook for a long time. It’s way more than a minute. I watch him, questioning whether it would be a good idea to say something or ask him what he’s doing, but I decide not to. He looks deep in concentration.

After about ten minutes of me just sitting there looking and waiting for Frank, I see him have some sort of small epiphany. I look at him curiously to see what it is that he’s discovered.

“Wait a minute,” Frank says slowly and then looks at the letters which are still spread out in front of him. They’re not very straight or uniform, having been bumped while we were looking at them, but Frank grabs the gold one, and switches it with the pink. I watch him, wondering what it is that Frank’s got rattling around in his head. What purpose does switching the two colors serve?

“Gerard,” Frank says, and he looks up from his notebook, looking a little paler than he’d looked a few minutes ago.

“Yeah?”

Frank frowns, “well, what I’m doing is taking the first letter of each color and seeing what they spell out. So I’m looking for a six letter word.”

“Okay?”

“Well I’m fairly sure that the second letter is N. The third letter is I. The fourth or fifth is G. The last letter is A for azure.”

“N for navy blue, I for indigo, and G for gold?”

“Correct,” Frank nods, “Well, when I take a wild guess, I think that the gold and the pink were switched. I believe you accidentally switched them, so when we change them back, this makes the G the fourth letter, and the pink was the fifth letter.”

I nod slowly, because I understand the words he’s saying individually, but as a whole, his sentences don’t make any sense. I’m completely lost.

“Are you still with me?” Frank asks.

“I think I might be?” I say, though that’s somewhat of a lie.

Frank sighs and then looks worriedly at me, continuing on, “well, I took a shot in the dark here, because I don’t know if this first color is supposed to be a P, E, or R. Knowing that the second letter is an N, effectively tells us that we can cancel out the letter R. This means that our word either has a silent P or the word starts with EN.”

“What does that mean?”

“Well, the most likely option is EN. There’s more words that start with EN than there are that start with PN.”

“Just give me the whole word, Frank, I’m not good at crossword puzzles,” I tell him.

Frank nods and then turns his notebook around for me to look at what he’s written there. He’s scribbled over the entire page, and circled what he believes to be the letters we’re looking for.

I look down at the colors he’s decided the letters are. Eggplant, navy blue, indigo, gold, magenta, and azure.

All together, and in order, Frank’s spelled out the word ‘ENIGMA.’

“Gerard,” Frank says, “I don’t think that’s a coincidence.”

I shake my head, because the look on Frank’s face is what I’ve been waiting for, but it’s not the one I want to actually see. Frank looks terrified. He never looks scared. He’s the brave one, he’s the one who protects me from the monsters in horror movies. He’s supposed to be the guy who doesn’t get afraid. I haven’t seen Frank genuinely scared in four years.

“I don’t think that’s a coincidence either,” I say.

Frank takes a long breath and says finally, “Gerard, whoever this is that’s sending you these letters, these threats, they know who I am. Someone out there is telling us that they know who The Enigma is.”

Chapter End Notes

I could've used green instead of gold, but the thing is that green is not a creative color.

Though I Don't Know This Chapter Title is Fairly Sarcastic Too

Chapter Summary

A haiku:
Summaries are hard.
Why do I even write them?
Five more syllables.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Frank, The Enigma died,” I say.

“I know!” Frank replies, “I know, Gerard. I buried that part of myself. A long time ago. I wanted him to stay dead. I thought he would.”

“Frank,” I say, trying to gather my thoughts. Mostly I’m trying to convince myself that this is a coincidence, but what are the odds of that? I agree with Frank that the two colors gold and navy blue can’t be anything else. The other ones might spell something else out though. Possibly. I don’t know. That dark purple really does look like indigo. Oh my god Frank is right.

“There is only one person, who isn’t sitting at this table, that knows about who I was before I met you,” Frank says.

“Yeah, you’re criminal friend! He could’ve told someone!”

Frank shakes his head, “I don’t know, criminals are fairly reliable.”

I look at Frank like he's insane, because he did just vouch for the reliability of lawbreakers.

"You're looking at me like I'm insane," Frank says, "Gerard, trust me, criminals are way more dependable than civilians. There is an honor code among them. Maybe not among killers, but my friends are mostly thieves. Thieves have one hell of an honor code."

"Why were all your friends thieves?"

"Because assassins don't play well with others," Frank says.

"I know an ex-assassin who seems to be pretty good at interacting with people," I say with a shrug.

"Oh yeah?" Frank smirks, "well you're missing the fact that he quit that life. This is about my friend, or whatever you want to call him, The Conte. Haven't you ever heard of honor among thieves? The Conte doesn't care who I am, Gerard. He wouldn't tell anyone. He doesn't care."

"What about a payday though?" I ask.

"What? You think he'd sell me out for a couple of extra bucks? Pocket money? Gerard, he'd make more money hitting up a homeless shelter."

"Frank, I hate to say it, but you killed a lot of people. Someone might be bitter about that," I suggest.

Frank makes a huffing sound and I can tell I brought up a topic that he doesn't want to talk about. I bite my lip and look down at the table.

"Gerard, I thought we were working on the suspicion that it was Derek Fischer who wanted you dead, not someone

from *my* past," Frank says.

"No, what I said was that I didn't know who was after us, and that I thought it might be someone just praying off the convenience of him being released," I reply, "my theory is that Mr. Fischer has literally nothing to do with this. I don't think he's trying to kill us at all. I think that someone wants us to think that."

"Gerard, this isn't a cop show. This is actually real, like real life. Now, you've got me convinced that someone, I don't know who, but someone, wants us dead. That is one thing I'll agree with you on, but what gives you the idea that there has to be some big plot twist? You know usually, the obvious answer is the obvious *answer*. The only kind of people who get away with fooling people, are those who are either really fucking good at staging a crime scene, or professionals. Usually they're the same thing. Gerard, I highly doubt that Derek Fischer is smart enough to cover up his tracks, and I also highly doubt someone out there hates me so much that they're able to pin it on him. All odds say Derek Fischer is our guy."

"But how does he know who you are, Frank?" I ask, and that gets Frank to shut up.

"I don't know actually."

"Well, do you still know how to get into contact with your friend? Whatever his name was? Can you call him and ask him if he told anyone?" Gerard asks.

"He wouldn't tell anyone, I already said this!"

"He might have!"

"He doesn't give a shit about me Gerard!"

“Well how far did your friendship extend? How did you meet him?”

“What?” Frank asks, “Oh it was nothing. I needed to break into this big old house to take care of a hit, and I didn’t know how to disable the alarm system. I got in touch with Conte, and he helped me out, so we split the fee. There were a few times after that where I would call on him, or he’d call on me, because Conte ain’t a killer unless he’s got to be.”

“I don’t like the sound of that,” I reply, making a face.

“Look, I don’t want to talk about it. Gerard, you know what I’ve done, and you know that I hate myself for it, but it happened, so that’s that. I don’t want to believe that this is what’s happening though. I think it’s Derek Fischer,” Frank professes.

“Alright,” I nod, even though I don’t necessarily agree with him, “Well how about you get into contact with him and ask if he knows how you’re secret slipped? There are only three people in the world who are supposed to know, Frank. You and me, and this Conte guy, but that’s not exactly the case. Unless it’s your friend.”

“Yeah right. Conte is the most apathetic person on the planet. He doesn’t even care about money or anything anymore, he’s in it for the thrill. He wouldn’t put me away or get you shot for a thrill. That’s not exciting. He’s like a thrill junkie, but he’s harmless to me. He’d never hurt me if I didn’t wrong him. He’s the kind of guy who might steal your watch for you acting like a jerk to him, but he wouldn’t get so hung up over anything that he’d want to kill you for it. Besides, we’ve never been at odds with each other. I’ve never pissed the guy off. Trust me, you’d know if I had.”

“Please, Frank,” I ask, “do this for me?”

Frank groans and sighs, “Yeah alright. I don’t know that I have his number anymore though.”

“Well that burner phone, do you still have that burner phone you called him with?”

“Did you just ask me if I have a burner phone from four years ago?” Frank asks, looking at me like I’m insane, “Gerard, it was a *burner* phone. Of course I don’t fucking have it. I threw it in a river. It’s long gone.”

“So how do you get in contact with him?”

“Oh I have my ways,” Frank says looking wistfully off into the distance like he’s having a war flashback. He’s so cute that I almost don’t want to roll my eyes at him, but I do so anyway because he looks so fucking stupid.

“So then, do it,” I say.

“Alright fine,” Frank says, holding his hands up as if in defense, and then he stands up. I watch him push his chair in and then walk over to our room to change. Frank comes back a few minutes later with a sweatshirt and looks at me like he’s about to ask me something.

“What?”

“You sure about this?”

“Frank, someone want’s us dead, and considering the nature of their secret message, it probably isn’t a good idea to tune the police into this.”

"Yeah you're right," Frank says, "the cops are probably still after me."

"So we have to explore our options. Indulge this suspicion. Just for me, okay?" I ask him.

Frank nods slowly and heads toward the door, "I'll do this under one condition, Gerard."

"What?"

"Well, for starters, I'm going to fuck you into the mattress tonight."

"Sounds fair."

"And second," Frank says, "You're going to finish those pages you have due while I'm gone."

"You're telling me to do my homework while you go out and try to get into contact with your friend the felon? I do not remember high school being like this," I respond.

"That's precisely what I'm saying."

"Where are you going anyway?" I question him before he leaves.

"Oh you really don't want to know," Frank says, "besides, I swore to myself that I would never let you see this part of me more than you had to. So you stay here and do your thing, I'm going to go do mine."

"Well, um, be careful?"

"This is such a weird conversation," Frank says, shaking his head before he opens the door. I watch him leave and then frown while I look back at the letters in front of me.

Honestly, I don't know how to feel about the fact that I finally got Frank to believe me. I'm not actually positive he does believe me yet, but seriously what else could these letters spell out? PNIGFB? We're taking a wild guess here, but Frank looked really confident that he had the right names for the colors. I don't know what to think honestly. I want to think that Frank knows what he's doing well enough to keep us both alive. Well alive at least until tonight, Frank's promise sounded pretty enticing.

Chapter End Notes

The haiku, by the way, is in honor of the fact that this is chapter five, which, in Enigma, had the best haiku I've ever written.

Fluff/Not Fluff/Patrick Stump is Hot/What Even is This Chapter Title?

Chapter Summary

I don't know, this isn't exactly fluff, but it isn't exactly not fluff.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Gerard!” Someone screams at me when they enter the house, and I roll my eyes to see Frank scrambling inside.

“What?”

“We have a major problem. We have a *really* major problem. We have a giant problem. We have a giant problem bigger than the sun. We have a problem so big that the size of it cannot possibly be described with any human form of tongue. Our problem is so gigantic that-”

“Frank!” I interrupt him, “would you mind telling me what our problem is?”

It’s not like I’m unhappy to see Frank, because I definitely am, but I was on a roll and Frank broke my rhythm. It’s fine, I needed a break soon anyway. It’s been four, almost five hours since he left and I don’t know how long he was going to be out, but he’s here now and that’s all that matters. He’s alive at least right now.

“Oh, yeah sorry. Gerard, this is huge. This is like, flee the country huge,” Frank says and that’s got me listening. I hadn’t looked at Frank quite yet, but now that I see the look

on his face he's gotten my attention. Frank looks absolutely terrified, and I don't understand how he can look that scared and also be that attractive simultaneously.

I turn around on the couch, setting my sketch pad on the coffee table in front of me. I turn to look at him, on my knees, with my arms on the back of the couch to steady myself.

"Well than it would be really nice if I knew what was going on!" I say to him.

"Gerard, Conte is dead."

"He's what?"

"He's dead," Frank says.

"How? Why? When?"

"Well see the thing is that Conte shouldn't be dead. He absolutely one hundred and fifty percent shouldn't be dead. For one thing, no one in the fucking world knows who he is. Not a single person. I don't think he's got family, I don't know where the fuck he's from, possibly Italy, but he could be from anywhere. I'm not sure if that's his original face or if he's had it remodeled a few times. His accent has no specific dialect, his ties are numerous but easily cut. I don't know where he lives, I don't know if he's even alive. I don't know if he's fucking human or not. He could be a vampire for all I know, thought I doubt it, because vampires aren't real."

"Nicholas Cage," I point out.

"No time for that, Gerard," Frank says and if I wasn't scared before I sure as hell am now, because Frank never

tells me to *stop* joking around. Never.

"Okay, sorry," I reply.

"It's okay, this is just a really big deal, Gerard."

"Alright, tell me when it happened."

"Word on the street is that he dropped about three weeks ago, right about when you started getting your letters," Frank says.

"And why was he killed?"

"I can only guess it's because someone knew he wasn't an average citizen. I highly doubt that whoever killed him knew who I was three weeks ago. They probably tapped him out for his source of information, and then tapped him out of life."

"Okay," I nod, "so why aren't we dead yet?"

"Well that's obvious, isn't it? Whomever is after us is scary as fuck. They like to play with their food."

"Yikes," I say, feeling myself get a little colder in the apartment.

"Precisely," Frank agrees, "so someone wants us to squirm. This is both a blessing and a curse, because at this point in time, they don't know that we're onto them. They don't know that we're aware of our status, but we do know now."

"Okay," I nod, "so we go into hiding again?"

"We might have to," Frank agrees, "otherwise we're dead."

"Fuck," I groan.

“Well, but this time we’re not positive what allies this person has. We don’t know who it is, whereas when we went into hiding last time, we did know.”

“So what you’re saying is?”

“Well, we don’t know how far we need to go to hide, so my best guess is we should stay in the city,” Frank tells me.

“But won’t that make us less safe?”

“Gerard, this is a big city. Huge even. You could hide forever here and not be found. We need to seclude ourselves so that no one knows who we are, but we do need to hide,” Frank states.

“But what about my life?” I ask him, “I don’t say that to sound like I’m being ungrateful of you or your idea or anything, but I’m somewhat of a public figure. I have things to go to, places to be.”

“Well yeah, but you can’t attend those things at all if you’re dead,” Frank states.

“Alright, valid point. So we hide then. If you think that’s best, then I agree with you to the fullest.”

“Yeah, so the three of us are going to have to hide-”

“Three?”

“Mikey!” Frank says looking at me like I’ve lost my head, “we need to protect Mikey too. It’s been established, widely even, that we are basically just as vulnerable without Mikey as we would be if we were ass-naked on international television. Mikey is leverage. If the two of us were to go into

hiding without him, we might as well not do it at all because-

"Because than they'd just ransom Mikey off like Banks did."

"Precisely," Frank says.

"So then we hide," I say, "we hide and we bring Mikey with us, and we don't leave the safehouse at all if we can prevent it."

"I'm thinking we should hire a private investigator," Frank says, "though I think we might want one who doesn't play by the rules so much. Under the law, not bothered by legality."

"Great," I say sarcastically, "We'll be bringing someone else into this."

"Well we don't have to tell them the whole truth."

"Do you think it's best?" I ask him.

"What? Yeah, I do."

"But will you be putting that person's life in danger?" I ask him further.

"It's possible," Frank says, with a shrug.

"Then I don't want to include someone else in on this," I say and Frank's face falls, "Frank, Mikey is enough as it is. He's already an innocent party. I'm not going to add any more people to this, because I don't want anyone to get hurt because of this. No one. Absolutely nobody, got that?"

"No, I get it," Frank nods.

“Good.”

Frank breathes in deeply, “I would be lying if I said that you were wrong in that decision. You’re right, and I know that. We’ll keep it between the two of us then. This stays here, we don’t want anyone else slipping my secret anyway.”

“Exactly,” Gerard nods.

“So then we’re going to have to hide ourselves, and I guess I’ll have to investigate this myself,” Frank declares.

“No!” I answer, “Absolutely not, you won’t do anything by yourself, okay? You’re in just as much danger as me. We can hide, sure, but if you think for one second I’m going to let you go out alone and try to find out what’s happening, then you’ve lost your fucking mind. I’m going to come with you.”

“But Gerard-”

“Don’t ‘but Gerard’ me, okay? I’m going to be with you at all times,” I tell him, “I’d rather get shot in the face *with* you then wait for you to get home one day to see that you never will come back. I’m not even going to let you get coffee by yourself, because the last time that happened, you got kidnapped.”

Frank makes a face and I can tell he disagrees with me on that, but I stand by what I said completely. I will not let him do this all by himself when I might lose him. I don’t want to lose him. That’s the last thing in the world I would let happen.

“You’re stubborn,” Frank shakes his head.

“Well yeah, but you’re my fucking husband and I’m not going to let you get yourself killed unless I’m there to do

something hella stupid.”

Frank makes a face and looks at me like he hates me and also wants to give me a hug.

“Gerard!” He groans, and walks over to me heavily.

“What?”

“I hate you,” he frowns. Frank stops on the other side of the couch, facing me. He’s about level with me now, because the couch isn’t very tall.

“I know,” I say.

“Fucking kiss me!” Frank says when he steps close enough and I do because he looks way too stressed out right about now. Though really, I don’t need to be convinced to kiss Frank. I need to be convinced to *not* kiss Frank. Who am I kidding though, no one can get me to not kiss Frank. You’d need a crowbar.

“So what is it then?” I ask him.

“What is what?”

“What is the last thing that you haven’t told me, and are trying to refrain from telling me because you’re afraid of what my reaction is going to be?” I say. I know him too well.

“Oh, well, um,” Frank says stepping back slightly, and I look at him with my best disapproving glare. “You’re not gonna like it.”

“Well I assume that’s why you didn’t say it already.”

“No, I mean, you’re really not going to like it,” Frank says, “really really. It’s not good. It’s probably the worst news of

this whole ordeal, actually.”

“Well then I really do have to know, Frank,” I say.

“Ugh,” Frank groans, “well basically, Conte, he didn’t go out gracefully. He didn’t have a very... uh, quick death.”

“Fuck,” I respond, “do I wanna know?”

“Well no, but you insisted!”

“Don’t make it graphic.”

“Okay well basically, he was kind of, sort of, maybe a little bit tortured a bit.”

“Tortured!” I exclaim, because that is not okay. Like at all.

“Well, yeah. I mean, I told you he wouldn’t have given me up by choice, but he did, so I asked around, and yeah, he was tortured. It wasn’t pretty. Whoever this was, they knew what they were fucking doing. This was no dunking your head in ice cold water though. What I went through would’ve been Disneyworld compared to what happened to him. That’s how they got Conte talking. It was tortured out of him.”

“Oh god, so that’s kind of terrifying,” I say, trying to take the repulsion out of my face. That guy was Frank’s friend, not mine. I may be more scared in a selfish way than how I probably should be. Usually we feel bad when we hear that someone who helped us was tortured than murdered, but I never met the guy, and he was a criminal. I’m a fucking hypocrite, what am I saying? I’m married to an ex-assassin. I don’t want to be tortured though, I didn’t sign up for that!

“Gerard,” Frank says, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry. It’s becoming clearer to me that this is my fault. This is all my fucking fault and it’s going to get us killed, get *you* killed, and that’s the last thing I want to happen. I wish I could just make this all stop happening. I thought we were gonna be safe, I really did. I left that life behind and I thought we’d be safe, but we’re not and I’m sorry.”

“Don’t you dare blame yourself, Frank.”

“But-”

“Frank!” It’s just one of those days where we’re interrupting each other a lot, “Frankie, four years ago, you said the same thing to me every day. You told me over and over again not to blame myself because I wasn’t the sicko with the need to kill people. It may have been my actions that triggered what happened, but you were right. I wasn’t the one who was trying to kill someone. You said it yourself. You did a bad thing Frank, but that doesn’t mean you deserve to die. There’s nothing in the world that would mean you deserve to be dead.”

Frank looks back at me and he looks like a wounded dog, which breaks my heart a little. We don’t even know if the suspicion is correct that this has nothing to do with Derek Fischer. That’s just a guess we have at this point. We don’t know *who* to blame, but Frank’s already taking the blame unto himself. Oh god, this must’ve been what it was like for him to see me when Banks was trying to kill me. It’s not a pleasant feeling at all.

“I love you, Frankie. I do, and I know I shouldn’t, but I do. Whatever is happening right now, whoever wants to hurt us, it’s not your fault.”

Frank nods slowly, and he looks back at me, straight into my eyes, “okay, Gerard.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah,” Frank says, “Whatever you or I did that caused this, it’s not our fault. We’re not the bad guy.”

I grab the back of Frank’s neck until our foreheads meet together, and I look at him as closely as I can get, “I’m not going to let you die, Frankie.”

“I know, and I won’t let you die either. And I love you too, Gerard.”

Chapter End Notes

Hey so you should leave a comment (please).

I'm Just Really Glad To be Writing This Again and That Feeling Hasn't Worn Off Yet

Chapter Summary

"Basically, Mikey is Flat Stanley," is probably the best line I've ever written.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Mikey," I say, knocking on his door repeatedly. I've been out in front of his apartment for almost two minutes and he hasn't let me in. I may kill him.

"Mikey, given the fact that I am standing outside of your apartment right now, I think we can embrace the fact that I know where you live," I say.

"I am prolonging the inevitable," Mikey shouts at me through the door.

"Well could you let me in at the very least? I'm cold and afraid out here," I shout at him sarcastically.

Mikey opens the door to look at me like I've lost my head, "dude, you are indoors."

"I know," I say, walking past him, "but it got you to open the door, didn't it?"

"Asshole," Mikey mutters, closing the door behind me.

“Call me whatever you like, are you almost ready to go?”

“I’m, ugh, you gave me ten minutes forewarning, okay? I need a little more time, just give me some fucking time. Where’s Frank anyway?”

“He’s across town,” I say, “He’s getting us a hotel room, but he’s getting us some maybe not so authentic ID’s first.”

Mikey rolls his eyes, “‘course he is.”

“So, you’re not going to question me about this then?” I ask him.

“Look, Gerard, the testimony of one person, even if that person is my brother, doesn’t mean much. The fact that Frank is backing you up on this though... yeah, I’ll listen to him. I don’t want any part of what happened last time, but I also want to breathe. My boss is going to hate me though, Gerard.”

“Not as much as we’re going to be hating each other,” I say. “We are going to be stuck bouncing around hotel rooms again. Well, that’s not true, Frank’s looking into finding us a temporary apartment somewhere across town from our place, but that might take a little while.”

“Define ‘a little while.’”

“I don’t know, jeez, Mikes. Maybe a week, maybe more. I don’t know what real estate is like in this city. I’ve lived in the same place for six years!”

“Yeah, whatever,” Mikey says, “and do I get any details about what’s going on? Is this about Banks? Fischer?”

“What else would it be about?” I say, brushing it off like it’s a joke. Mikey still doesn’t know about Frank’s past, so obviously, I can’t tell him that it might be some assassin guy who wants Frank dead.

“Lots of things,” Mikey shrugs, “could be that you didn’t tip well enough on a pizza delivery, or maybe you pissed off one of your fans who are crazy enough as it is, because you’re a talentless loser.”

“Thanks.”

“Or it could have something to do with Frank’s old job,” Mikey says, throwing a shirt into his suitcase.

“What old job?” I ask him.

“The one where he killed people,” Mikey says, slowly like my head is all messed up.

“What?” I ask, feeling my blood chill a little bit. I can tell that my eyes widen when I look at him, and I feel the hair at the back of my neck stand up. Since when did Mikey know about Frank? What? When did that happen?

“Oh please, Gerard,” Mikey says, giving me a bitch-face, but I can barely tell he’s making a face at all, because he just looks sort of normal, “Don’t tell me you think I’m literally *that* stupid.”

“You... what? Huh?”

“Calm your tits, I’m not going to tattle on him,” Mikey says, and continues packing his bag like it’s no big deal.

“When? Mikey! When?” I mumble exasperatedly.

“Gerard,” Mikey says, looking at me seriously, “I have known for over four and a half years.”

“What?”

“You think I’m an idiot. I’m not you know,” Mikey says.

“Why did you never say anything about it?” I ask, sounding louder than I had intended to.

“Because it never really came up. Also it didn’t seem important to tell you that I knew,” he shrugs, “I trust Frank. I do, because he seems like a good person to me. Always has. It wasn’t exactly hard to believe what he did in his past, he’s got this whole war-mannerism about him, like he’s seen things that would make you shit your pants, but he’s never seemed like a *bad* person.”

“You trust Frank?” I ask. It’s not like Frank isn’t trustworthy, and we do spend a fair amount of time with Mikey, but I didn’t know we spent enough time for Mikey to really trust him like that. Trust him enough to let his brother marry an ex-assassin. I probably wouldn’t even let Mikey marry an ex-assassin. Then again, Mikey would probably become an assassin himself if I ever told him that. He doesn’t like being told what to do.

“Well yeah,” Mikey says, “because you trust him.”

“And you trust me?”

“I’m your brother, Gerard,” Mikey says.

“Okay,” I say, nodding my head, “so when exactly did you figure it out. And how?”

Mikey sighs, and walks into the bathroom to grab his toothbrush and various other things, but comes back and looks at me. He doesn't seem too keen to start talking, probably because he prefers utter silence in most things.

"Mikes?"

"What?"

"When and how did you find out?" I repeat.

"Ugh, well it was kind of obvious, no offense. You two thought you were so good at hiding it, but you really weren't. I mean, the cops wouldn't have been able to tell, because they didn't have to live with you for six months, but it was painfully transparent. Frank's mysterious friend who just so happened to know how to break into one of the wealthiest people in the cities' house. Said friend also bugging and listening in on phone conversations. The way he held that big-ass gun when we were in all those hotels. Just looked like he was really familiar with it. Plus you two treat it like it's some inside joke. You're always dropping hints, thinking it blows straight over my head, but I'm taller than both of you, so nothing goes over my head."

"So when?"

"I don't know, right about the time when you and Frank got really angry at each other, and he said something like 'you'd be dead without me' and I thought that he meant that charity thing, but then I was like, oh maybe Frank's the assassin. That was a hell of a plot twist in my head, I'll tell you that. But the dumbass really fucking likes you so I figured, alright, he's a reformed assassin, the one who didn't kill you."

“You could’ve told me if you knew!” I say, “I mean, he was still a hired assassin! He might’ve still wanted me dead, you didn’t know that. I might’ve died, Mikes!”

“Oh come on, you knew. I knew you knew. The way you act around him, of course you know.”

“Wait, how do I act around him?”

“Gross, Gerard.”

“No, just, I mean, yeah. How do I act around him?” I ask, “I can’t exactly see myself.”

“Just like you’re looking at some piece of artwork that you’re really proud of. Like you have something to do with who he is,” Mikey says, and he continues to fill his suitcase like nothing is happening. “Besides, I wouldn’t exactly protest if you died.”

I throw a pillow at him, which he dodges because he knows me pretty well. Also he’s spent upwards of eighteen years living with me so he does know my usual course of action in a lot of things.

“I’m allowed to joke around!” Mikey says, “That’s not why though. Gerard, he got me out of jail. I’d have been murdered in there. I owe him my life too. Also he sacrificed himself for both of us when Banks died. Frank’s not just a guy who isn’t bad, he’s a good person too.”

I smile shyly thinking about him, “yeah, he’s good. I like him.”

I’m hit in the head with the same pillow projectile I’d aimed at Mikey. So we may have lived those eighteen years together growing up and stuff, but Mikey always had an

edge on me. He's so much shiftier. If he ever considered a career in being a spy, he'd find it fruitful. Also he's bone thin, he could probably hide in that space between the dresser and the wall where everyone hides dirty socks that they don't want to take care of. Basically, Mikey is Flat Stanley.

"So you know that Frank's an ex-assassin," I say, staring stunned at the ground when I remember what's happening. I had a momentary lapse where I was daydreaming about Frank.

"Yep," Mikey says, popping the 'p' at the end of the word.

"Okay then," I say. "Well then there's something that I'm sure you don't know, that you'll want to."

"What is that then?" Mikey asks.

"Well, at this point in time, Frank and I believe that this is an attack from someone likely who is after *him* rather than me. We don't think they're associated with Derek Fischer or Banks in the slightest at all."

"Okay," Mikey nods.

"Well, we were trying to figure out how anyone could possibly know about Frank's past. He went by a pseudonym. Probably because 'Frank' doesn't sound all that threatening, and also, he'd have been arrested for his job, like, seven years ago if he hadn't."

"Right," Mikey says, looking at me like he's annoyed with the fact that I haven't gotten to the point.

"Well basically, we came to the conclusion that the only person who could've told on us was his old friend. You know,

the one who broke into Banks' house and laced every liquid he had with laxatives. We decided that he was the only one who knew. So Frank went to go talk to him, to ask if he told anyone."

"And did he?"

"Well that's the thing," I say, cringing at what Frank told me, "he did spill the beans, but not by choice. Mikes, the guy was tortured. He's dead. We believe that the same person who tortured him is after us."

Mikey freezes and actually has an expression on his face for the first time during this conversation. I look back at him, blinking at him, waiting for his answer.

"So the people want to kill us aren't afraid to torture us before killing us?" Mikey questions.

"That's what we think. I mean, he did send me all those messages to warn me. Also, I've had the feeling that someone's been following me for so long. He or she wants to make us sweat," I say.

"Okay," Mikey says, and I see him gulp slightly, "yeah, so let's get going then. Let's go hide somewhere."

"You scared?" I ask him.

"Little bit."

I look at him and frown, "well I'll tell you what Frank said to me. Fear is good, it'll keep you on your feet. Also it just might make you piss yourself."

Chapter End Notes

Just a reminder that the best part of my day is literally seeing your comments so it'd be lovely if you were to do so.

What Would You Call This? Comic Relief? Good Enough For Me. This is Comic Relief.

Chapter Summary

I don't know what to type here. I really like Russell Howard.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“What’ya think?” Frank asks.

“I hate it,” Mikey says, walking into the apartment. To be fair, I’m not keen on it either. This apartment is small. It’s really not made for three people. I can tell though that Frank chose it in part because of the location, but mostly because one bedroom is on the exact other side of the apartment as the other. Frank was thinking ahead.

“So, how do you know we weren’t followed to this apartment?” I ask, closing the front door behind me.

“I just do,” Frank says, “There was no one tailing me, and if there was, I lost them.”

“How are you so sure?”

“I have that history, Gerard,” Frank says, eyeing Mikey in the corner of his eye.

“No need to skirt around the edges,” Mikey says, sticking his foot under the rug in the living room for some reason.

I'm not sure what on earth Mikey is trying to find under there, but he seems intent on checking. Maybe a trap door. That'd be cool. Knowing Frank, that might not even surprise me.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, yeah, uh, Frank," I say, forgetting that I didn't tell Frank when we met him at the apartment, "Mikey's known about you for like-

"The whole time," Mikey finishes.

"Right, yeah."

"What?" Frank asks, looking shocked, and also a bit angry, and I get a little nervous that he's going to explode at me for telling Mikey. I didn't, but that would be a logical assumption.

"Sorry?" I offer.

"Mikey, you... what? I don't even know what to," Frank splutters, "how'd you find out?"

"Uh, I have a brain," Mikey says, "and eyes."

"Gerard?" Frank asks.

"I didn't tell him! I didn't know he knew! If I'd known he knew I would have told you. I just found out too. But c'mon, it's Mikey. You trust him," I say.

"Well yeah, I trust him, sure, but I also trusted Conte and he was tortured. What if they get Mikey?" Frank asks, and that is a terrifying thought. I would never forgive myself if I put Mikey in a situation where he might get tortured. I've

never forgiven myself for what happened four years ago. I almost got the guy killed, like three times, and I got him put in jail, and oh fuck, I am a horrible brother.

"I'm a really awful brother," I say, frowning at the dingy looking old sofa that's probably been there since the building was first built, like several million years ago.

"Yeah," Mikey says, after he's finished expecting the carpet.

"No I mean it," I reply, walking over to the couch that is really going to need to be replaced sometime soon because it is nasty.

"Gerard, you're not a bad brother!" Frank says.

"Uh, Frank? Are you really the best judge of that? You don't have any siblings," Mikey says, "but I'm just kidding, Gerard. You're so critical of yourself."

"Mikey, I put you in danger. Brothers are supposed to tease each other about their new boyfriend or girlfriend. They're supposed to throw pillows at each other! They're supposed to paint mustaches on each other after one of them falls asleep. One thing they are not supposed to do is get each other put on the hit list of a demented murderer!"

"Well, Gerard," Mikey says, "I've already thrown a pillow at you today, and to fulfill the quota of making fun of your boyfriend, Frank is stupid. Also I will be happy to draw a mustache on your face while you're sleeping."

"That's probably the only form of facial hair he's capable of," Frank jokes.

"But I am going to end up getting everyone killed!" I say, sitting down on the couch which I regret instantly after

doing so. This couch smells like mothballs. Mothballs and stale laundry detergent. I didn't know that laundry detergent could even *be* stale, but I now know what it would smell like if it could.

"Well we didn't get killed last time," Frank says, and sits down next to me and then makes a face so I know that he must think the same of the couch. Though given the fact that we gave Frank all of an afternoon to find a place, I'd say he did the best he could. He said this is just temporary, but he'd rather not get us a hotel room. I don't blame him. This apartment is shitty, but a hotel room would be worse, and they're easier to break into.

"Yeah, but that was pure luck," I reply.

"Gerard, we literally went through everything last time," Frank says, "dude I was thrown into the ocean and we're still here. Mikey was in jail and we still made it. We were run off the road and chased into the woods. Mikey and I were literally both captured by Banks and held hostage. If we can make it through all of that, we can do it again."

"You say that so confidently but you seem to be forgetting that we were just really motherfucking lucky."

"Who says we can't be lucky again?" Mikey asks, now looking at the lampshade on the side table next to the couch. I've known him all my life, but I can't deny, sometimes, Mikey weirds even *me* out.

"I can guarantee you you're going to be lucky again," Frank says suggestively and Mikey makes a disgusted face. The same one that I'm probably making just sitting on this couch.

"I am right here, Frank," Mikey says.

“Do you want me to pretend that I don’t fuck your brother?” Frank asks, looking at Mikey exasperatedly.

“I am under no illusion, but I don’t want to hear about my brothers sexual exploits,” he replies, and I shrug at him. I guess that makes sense, but when you’re married to someone as attractive as Frank, you really gotta just gloat the fuck out of it. How could I not brag? Frank is hot.

“Back to the days where Mikey lives down the hall,” I groan. “This was like three hundred percent of the reason why I moved out!”

“Don’t deny that you love me,” Mikey says, and he’s given up on looking around the apartment, because there’s really not much to look at. The layout is uninteresting. The small kitchenette is on the right wall, and the front door opens into a really small entry way which then leads into the living room. On one side of the living room, the one opposite of the kitchen, there’s the smaller bedroom, and the other is next to the kitchen. There’s only one bathroom, and the bathtub looks older than all three of us combined.

“I’m just going to try not to kill you, Mikes,” I say. Frank giggles and puts his head on my shoulder.

“This is all so domestic considering someone out there wants to kill us,” Frank says, and then laughs again.

“What are you laughing about?” I ask him.

“This whole situation is just so stupid,” Frank replies, “I mean, look at us. We are like the worst sitcom to ever be on TV. The ex-assassin, the nosy brother, and the prettiest redhead in the world sharing an apartment in New York City. Tune in every Thursday to see what new life-

threatening scenario they've landed themselves in this week."

"Coming soon to CBS," Mikey mutters.

"It's just so dumb. No one would buy it. I don't even buy it! There is no way this is life, but it *is*, and it's messed up," Frank says, and smiles, "but the strange thing is that I kind of like it."

"You like having a target on your back?" I ask, "Why did I marry you?"

"Because I'm adorable, but that's not the point. I mean that I just kind of feel like it's four years ago again. Kind of remember how great it was to get to fall in love with you in the weirdest fucking scenario known to man?" Frank says.

"Gross," Mikey notes, "I'm going to be in my really depressing closet bedroom. You know technically, I think that closet of a room is smaller than Harry Potter's cupboard under the stairs. Come get me if Hagrid comes a'knocking."

"You're so immature," I roll my eyes, "but suit yourself."

"Yeah, I'm just going to make out with your brother while you're gone!" Frank shouts at him.

Mikey walks into the bedroom, the one off the living room, and then Frank looks at me with this look in his eye. I don't understand how he is able to speak a completely different language just with his eyes. It's quite impressive.

"I recall you saying something about fucking me into a mattress?" I remind him.

“That mattress is fucking disgusting,” Frank says, shaking his head but smiling.

“Now Frank, you’ve never been dissuaded by that type of thing before. I mean there was that one time when we did it in the car. And the second time in that other car. And that really expensive car we took for a ‘test drive’ to piss of the car salesman. There was that shrub once. In one of the pews in that really anti-gay church. The confessional in that same church. The hall closet in that trashy movie theater. Oh, the Wendy House!”

“Oh, I didn’t say I was against it, I was just pointing out that it’s a revolting mattress,” Frank says.

“Doesn’t bother me.”

“No, me neither,” Frank says, and grabs my hand and then tugs me off the couch.

“Mikey is just over there,” Frank reminds me, with the raise of an eyebrow. I think he’s testing me. Seeing whether I’ll actually bang him while my brother is only a room away. We’ve done it before, who says I won’t do it again?

“I don’t care.”

“Good.”

Chapter End Notes

Oh by the way today is my birthday.

Ghosts

Chapter Summary

Hey look Helena posted a chapter, you should read it because she didn't have to do that but she did which was nice. She's cool. I like her. Someone tell her to stop talking in third person.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Michael James Way!” I hear Frank screaming from across the apartment. Given that this whole apartment is about the size of my entire living room in our actual apartment, I don’t see why he has to yell, but I assume Mikey did something that pissed him off. You don’t go middle naming people for no reason. That’s only for really serious things.

“What?” Mikey yells back.

“You didn’t pick your fucking towel up off the floor you fucking asshole,” Frank yells. I guess the reason Frank’s yelling is because he’s in the bathroom and, given the fact that ten minutes ago he said he was going to take a shower, he’s probably naked.

“Okay?” Mikey calls back. He’s sitting right next to me while we watch Clue on Netflix. Mikey will tell you that we’re only watching it because we couldn’t settle on anything else, but I know he just likes the sound of Tim Curry’s voice. Also he likes murder. Not real murderers, like the person who wants us dead, but he’s fine with it when it’s actors.

“You used *my* fucking towel!” Frank says.

“Oh,” Mikey says.

“He’s going to kill you later,” I say offhandedly.

“And he knows how to do it too,” Mikey points out.

“Yeah but he doesn’t have a gun.”

“I do too have a gun!” Frank shouts. It would surprise me that he can hear us, but it doesn’t because this apartment is just the pits. It’s so shitty. We can hear the people upstairs having sex every night. Frank and I can’t really complain though.

It’s been a week total now of living this apartment. So far, we have watched an unhealthy amount of movies, eaten an unhealthy amount of delivery pizza, and seen the sun an unhealthy amount of not at all. At least none of us are going to be getting skin cancer, though we might turn into vampires. That’d be kind of cool in theory but no one wants Mikey to live forever, it’d be hell. It’d be worse than hell. It’d be Chuck E. Cheese. Or a Brony convention.

“What do you want me to do?” Mikey asks. He doesn’t look all that scared, and he’s actually more interested in the movie than whatever threat Frank is going to give him.

“I want you to fall from a large height and die,” Frank says.

“Well unfortunately I’m not a Disney villain and we don’t have any balcony for you to push me off of, so you’re going to have to live with me,” Mikey replies.

“Gerard!” Frank yells.

“What? Oh, sorry,” I say, standing up and rushing around to find Frank a towel before he takes someone’s head off. I

have to find him something even though it's Mikey's fault, because I'm the idiot who married Frank. Sometimes, mainly times where I don't want to stand up, I regret that, but mostly I don't. I am lazy though, and sometimes I don't want to do things. Most of the time if I can not do something rather than do it, it's preferable.

Someone knocks on the door a minute after I stand up and I groan.

"Fuck," Frank whispers quietly. "Whatever you do, do not answer that door. Don't do it."

"What?" I ask, standing right outside the bathroom. It's open only a crack so that Frank can talk to me, and I'm confused when he hushes me.

I turn to see Mikey roll his eyes and stand up to go see whoever is there, but I shake my head at him.

"They might be able to hear us," Frank says.

"Gimme a sec," I say, walking over to the hall closet, which has no right to be called a closet because it's smaller than the locker I had in middle school. I grab a towel and walk back to the door. Mikey is standing in the middle of the room looking at me with a bored expression. He doesn't move any further to get the door, and I just wait for Frank to tell me what to do. He's the expert. He's the one who has any idea of what we're even doing.

There's no knocking a second time, and to be honest, I think it was just our landlord or something, but the lecture Frank gave us on opening the door while we're trying to use this apartment as a safe house floods back to me. Honestly that speech had felt like the lecture your mother gives you about not opening the door to strangers, only the way Frank

explained it was a hell of a lot more terrifying. For one thing, he made us watch the third episode of Luther to tell us why we should not open the door to strangers, and after that, I think I'll take his word for it.

Mikey just shrugs and goes to sit back down, while Frank closes the door on me after I hand him the towel. He comes out a second later looking damp with his pants askew, and his hair looks like a train wreck as well. I don't think he got a chance to dry off at all so those pants must be hella uncomfortable. I'm not going to complain about the lack of shirt. I am only human, and Frank looks good without a shirt. Sue me.

"Peephole?" I ask.

"No," Frank says, "peepholes are fallible."

"What do we do?"

Frank looks at me, walks over to the corner of the room next to the vent and he steps on the floor board. I hadn't noticed how Frank rigged the floorboard to work like an axle. He steps on one side and the other lifts up to reveal, unsurprisingly, a hollowed out space in the floor.

It's probably weird that I find it sexy that Frank has a gun in the floor, but I did fall in love with an assassin in the first place so obviously something is not right in my head. I really do need to get a cat scan or something, it's not normal to fall for people who try to kill you. He tried to kill more than once. Yeah something is wrong with me.

"What are you doing?" I ask him.

Frank doesn't respond, he just walks over to the front door and looks at it like it's about to explode. At this, I decide

pausing the movie might be a good idea, but when I try to, Frank stops me.

“What?”

“If the noise from the TV suddenly stops, someone must’ve stopped it, dumbass,” Frank replies.

After a minute of what feels like complete silence, even though the TV is still running in the background, there’s another knock. Both this knock and the first were very quiet, only barely audible. Frank looks a little more concerned at the second one because that means whoever was there, is still there. I just look at him, wondering whether I should run and hide or wait for Frank to do something.

He doesn’t have time to do anything because someone starts talking on the other side of the door before anyone can do anything.

“Frank I know you’re in there,” A voice that I don’t recognize says. I don’t know who the hell that is. It’s a man’s voice. That’s the most I know about it though.

I can’t see his face, but Frank freezes, standing right in front of the door. He’s out of the way of the peephole should someone try to look inside, but he’s right next to the door.

Frank moves so quickly that I barely even know what’s happening. All I know is that he opens the door, grabs whoever is out there, drags them into the apartment, and then slams the door back closed behind him.

I don’t even have time to ask what’s going on, before Frank is pushing the guy against the wall, and putting the gun to his chest. I can tell my eyes pop out of my head, even

though I don't remember telling myself to do that. Frank's got a gun to this dudes heart though and I am just freaking out. I've seen a guy die before, I was kind of glad to witness it in all honesty, I don't miss Banks in the slightest. One thing I haven't seen though is Frank kill a guy, and I'm scared that he's about to. It's the same feeling I got when that Slav broke into our apartment. What did Frank call him? Señor balaclava, I think. That guy is still in prison.

This guy isn't the same person, I wasn't under that suspicion. The way Frank is treating him just seems to be similar. The man is old, but he's the kind of guy who doesn't necessarily *look* old. He's got grey hair, but a young face. He's the kind of old guy who stays active, I suppose. He's a little scruffy with somewhat of a neck beard that is not at all flattering considering his hair is grey, but there's a lot to catch your eye about the man. For one thing, his clothes look too nice for this sort of apartment building. He looks like a lawyer or something, but he also looks like he owns a nightclub. I can't explain it.

He looks like he got into a bar fight recently. He's got a black eye that looks to be healing pretty well, and a split lip. I don't know that that's surprising though considering the kind of guys Frank used to deal with.

I'd say the guy tans easily so maybe he's Greek or Italian or something. I'm not so sure, and I only have a few seconds to evaluate him in the first place. He's just a weird looking dude, but not a bad looking dude, but not an attractive looking dude either.

I don't say anything, because Frank seems way too stern to have me butting in right about now. I look over at Mikey whose face looks just about as stunned as I feel. He must be surprised if he's got any expression at all.

“New accent,” Frank says to the guy, which makes no sense to me, but then again, I have no idea how these two know each other. I know they do know each other though, by the way they’re both acting. The guy pressed against the wall does not look scared in the slightest. He almost looks like he’s trying not to laugh. Frank’s face I can’t see when he’s looking the opposite way, but I can tell from how he’s behaving that he is pissed off.

“New life,” the guy says in response to Frank. I don’t know what the hell kind of accent his is, but Frank’s paying more attention to it, I guess.

“Who are you then?” Frank asks him, almost playfully.

“Clive Spencer.”

“Sounds fake.”

“It is fake.”

“I know it’s fake, but it shouldn’t be that transparent,” Frank says.

“You can talk about transparency,” the guy responds, whose name is apparently not Clive. I’m fucking lost, I don’t know what the hell is going on.

“How’d you find us then?” Frank asks.

“Not that hard,” he shrugs, which is a weird reaction because he does still have a gun to his chest.

“Mikey, hand me a pillow,” Frank says.

“What?” Mikey says, looking terrified that Frank would even address him right now. I don’t blame him. Mikey is

closer to the pillows though, as he's still standing next to the couch.

"You heard me," Frank says.

"Oh come on, we both know asphyxiation is not your game," the guy says to Frank.

"No, but I don't have a silencer," Frank says.

Holy fuck, I think Frank is going to murder this guy! I don't know how to react to that. I do not want to watch him kill someone. I trust Frank's judgment, but I don't want to see him kill a guy. That's the last thing I'd ever want to watch. I love Frank, I'd never be able to look at him the same again though if I had to actually *watch* him assassinate someone.

"Are you going to shoot me, Frank?" the guy asks, not even hiding his smile anymore. This guy is either a twisted masochist, or he doesn't believe Frank will kill him. I believe in Frank more than I believe in anything. He's not afraid to kill a person, it's just a matter of *who* he'd kill.

"I might," Frank says, "I want to have that as an option."

He takes the pillow from Mikey who is completely on the same level as me. I know I don't know a lot about Frank's past, and I understand a lot of why he doesn't want to divulge a lot about it, but I feel like I should have some guess as to who this person in our living room is, but I don't. I don't have a clue. Who the fuck is he, and why does Frank want to kill him?

"You want an explanation then?" the guy asks.

"You're dead," Frank states like it's obvious, "you are dead. You're dead. I saw you. In a morgue. I saw you. You were

dead. Now, you're not a ghost, so what the fuck aren't you telling me?"

"Pulled a few strings," the guy says as if it's an answer to Frank's question.

"Oh of course," Frank says, and I can feel his eyes rolling even though I can't see them. "You've got friends everywhere, don't you? Faking your fucking death is no big deal?"

"Done it before," the guy shrugs.

"So how much of it was true then?" Frank asks.

The guy raises his arms up to show Frank something and I realize that he's wearing gloves. They're black leather, nothing special, but expensive looking.

"Wanna see a magic trick?" the guy asks, Frank. That is either really creepy or really creepy. It's just a fucking creepy thing to say in this situation.

"Sure," Frank responds. I'd have gone with no on that one. Yeah, I'd have said no. Fuck, am I in a horror movie or something?

The guy takes one of his hands and prods at the pointer finger on his right glove, and it freaks me the fuck out when the glove bends in a way that it should not. There's no finger there! He doesn't have a finger. Oh my god, the guy doesn't have a finger! He's missing his finger. There is a hand attached to his body that does not have a finger that should have a finger where there is not one! His right pointer finger isn't there! No finger there. Finger is not there. That finger is not where it should be, and by that I mean that it isn't there at all.

"So you *were* tortured," Frank says.

It's right about now that the pieces click.

This man, the guy that's now standing with a gun to his chest, is Conte. This is the guy who helped us four years ago. Frank is holding a gun to the chest of the guy he'd been so adamant was an ally.

I don't know what the fuck is going on still, I just think I've figured out who the man right in front of us is.

"So you sold me out?" Frank asks.

"It was you or me."

"You sold me out," Frank says again, sounding really angry.

"You're not going to kill me though, we both know that," Conte says.

Frank turns to look at me for the first time, his grimace turning into somewhat of a plea as his eyes meet mine. I don't understand what he's trying to tell me without the words, but he looks upset.

Frank's head hangs for a moment and then he pulls the gun away from the man. Frank's taught me enough about guns that I know how to tell when he puts the safety back on. He doesn't put the gun down, but it's not much of a threat when he holds it so nonchalantly.

"You're right," Frank says. "You want to leave then?"

"Frank?" I speak up for the first time. I don't know what he's doing but I think asking the guy if he wants to leave sounds like a bad idea. I feel like that's just not smart. I

mean, he knows who Frank is, who I am, who Mikey is, and how to find us. Also, he sold us out before. I just feel like, all around, bad idea.

"I can't kill him, Gerard," Frank says, "I can't kill him. I mean, if he crosses me, I won't hesitate, but right now, he's our only shot."

"You've lost me," I reply. That's not true, he lost me a while ago, but I'm lost now too.

"Conte was tortured by the guy. I believe him when he says that. You should too, he's trustworthy to some extent. The point is that he wouldn't be here right now if not for two possibilities. The first possibility is that he escaped being tortured after revealing my name, and he now wants revenge on the guy who did that to him, because he's prideful and also that's a shitty thing to do to a person. The second possibility is that he's leading whoever's looking for us right here and he's betraying us for the sake of his own life."

"Oh is that all?" I say sarcastically. Mikey's still looking perplexed at the three of us like we're speaking a foreign language.

"To be honest, if I had to give you odds on which of the options is more likely, I'd say the odds are so far stacked against us that Conte is actually our ally that, really, I should shoot him on the spot," Frank says.

"You're right," Conte says, "I'm probably not here to help you."

"No, probably not," Frank agrees, "but whether he's a Benedict Arnold or not is inconsequential. He's not a murderer, I know that much, so it's highly unlikely Conte is

going to be the one to kill us, and if he tried you can bet I'll outdraw him in a flash, but that's not important. Without Conte here, we'll be at a standstill. We might be here for the rest of our lives, just waiting, which is a form of torture in and of itself. To move forward or backward though, I have to, for the sake of a façade, pretend I trust him."

"Doesn't telling him that you're pretending to trust him kind of eliminate the purpose of pretending in the first place?"

"Your husband is an idiot," Conte says.

"What?" I ask.

"Nothing, Gerard," Frank says, brushing me off like *I'm* the one who insulted Conte or something.

"Frank!" I say.

"Sorry," Frank says, and I notice that Frank's doing his best not to take his eyes off of Conte, or The Conte, or Clive, or whoever the hell this guy is. "Gerard, the best place to keep your enemy is right under your nose, and as of five minutes ago I don't know who to trust anymore. All I know is that I trust you and Mikey. This guy, I'm not so sure, but he has to think I trust him even though he knows I'm not going to trust him because why the fuck should I? So he knows I don't trust him, because I'm smart, but for both of our sakes, it's best if we treat each other like we do trust each other, even though that makes no sense because neither of us in fact trusts the other."

"Uh-"

"You know what, it's not important," Frank says, "you're pretty, you can be stupid sometimes. It's okay."

I start, "I'm not-"

"Not always, but sometimes you can be a little stupid."

"He's right," Mikey mumbles.

"Oh alright, so we're just going to disregard the fact that there's a guy who may very well be here to murder us in our home?" I ask. "And also, are you telling me that I'm allowed to be stupid solely because you find me attractive?"

"Which one do you want me to answer first?" Frank asks.

"This is so weird!" I say, collapsing over onto the couch.

"If it's any consolation," Frank says in a tone that tells me that it won't console me in the slightest, "he did lose a finger. I feel like that means he's got some sort of vendetta against the guy who cut it off."

"Yeah, that'd piss me off. A bit," I reply sardonically.

"How do we know he doesn't have a finger and he's not just hiding it inside his glove?" Mikey asks.

"Well it's been gone for what, like a month?" Frank asks looking at Conte, "Do you guys really want to see the stump of a finger that isn't there anymore after only a month?"

"No, I'm going to take his word for it," I say, "but Frank, I'm not happy about the fact that you let a guy who might be out to kill us into our house. That is so not cool."

"Oh you're using the angry spouse voice, really? Are you seriously angry with *me* that he's here? I didn't draw him a map," Frank says.

“You were the one who found us a safe house and it’s not all that safe if you’re dead friend can find us.”

“Touché.”

Chapter End Notes

Life hack: Go watch Big Hero 6 because it's fucking fantastic and also Fall Out Boy song.

Don't Get On Frank's Bad Side

Chapter Summary

What's the point of a summary? Either you're going to read it or you're not.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The Conte has been here for about twenty minutes and I have decided that I do not like him. I don't know if he's necessarily a bad dude or anything, but he's certainly not nice.

If you get really close to him you can tell that that isn't his original face. He's had a little work done. Frank mentioned that at one point or another. He told me that Conte was very good at changing his whole identity and that he's done it dozens of times. Honestly, I'd feel like that would get a little laborious after, like, the second time let alone more than twelve. It's not my life though.

The way Frank talked about this guy, I never thought he'd be very nice, but I thought he would at least be on our side. Now, I don't know. I don't know whether to trust him or not. I don't want to, but I might have to. He did save my life...

No, Frank saved my life. It's all been Frank. This guy couldn't give a shit about me. He doesn't care about me or Frank or Mikey, he's just afraid for himself. Pathetic. Frank is a way better person than he is. Frank doesn't live only for himself. He tried to risk himself for me and Mikey, I feel like that's proof enough. This man is just disgusting to me.

Besides, who the hell calls themselves The Conte? He ain't no Conte. Conte is Italian for something, but I'm not sure what. I think, like, just a noble person. What that guy does is not noble. He's a thief. He's a criminal, and he doesn't care. At least when Frank was a criminal he felt bad about it.

I look over at him. He's been standing in the kitchen for the past twenty minutes while Frank literally just decided to start ignoring him and watching Clue. I mean, I get that it's a funny movie and, yes, Tim Curry does have a really neat voice, but there is a guy who may or may not want to murder us in the kitchen! I can solve this one all by myself. It will be The Conte in the kitchen with the dagger. Well, I mean it might be Frank in the kitchen with the whatever the hell kind of gun that is, but then we'll have the same dilemma as the people in the movie with having too many dead bodies on our hands. One dead body is really enough if you ask me.

The Conte just standing there though. I've been trying to pluck up the courage to go over there and get water for like ten minutes but he's so creepy. I don't think he blinks.

Eventually I just decide to screw whatever fear I have of him and I stand up to get water, because it's either this or dehydration. Frank doesn't even move when I sit up from the couch. Mikey is in his room, which I would do to, but I don't trust either Frank or Conte alone in a room together.

Before I can even do anything though, Conte is trying to talk to me, and I can't think of a way to say 'please stop talking to me because you freak me the fuck out' without using those exact words.

"So you're the reason that The Enigma died then?"

"I, um, I guess," I reply. I *really* don't like this guy, he makes me extremely uncomfortable.

"You'd better be one fantastic human to force one of the greatest people in that field into retirement."

"Well, but, he killed people. He killed people! I don't feel bad about him bowing out."

"The people Frank killed would have died anyway," Conte says. "They were going to die. That's just a fact. When someone wants a person dead, they usually die. That's just the way it goes. Had it been a different assassin who'd killed them, they'd have still died. Frank just carried things out. He never sentenced people to murder."

"You say that they usually die," I say, "but here I am."

"That was the point of the 'usually.' To be honest, I don't know what could possibly make you so special that you're still alive, but whatever it is that made Frank give everything up for you, I don't see it."

"You're kind of an asshole," I say, although I really wish I could take back the 'kind of' part.

"I saved your life."

"No, Frank saved my life," I answer.

"Frank tried to kill you."

"But I'm alive, aren't I?" I spit at him.

I make my way back to the living room, which is barely even a separate room. I huff when I sit down next to Frank, and he puts his head on my shoulder.

"I'm sorry. There's a reason I never let you two meet," Frank says.

"Because he's a dick?"

"Well, I mean, when you're trying to break into a dude's apartment so that you can pay your rent for the next few months, but he has a really expensive security system so you have to find someone who knows how to break in, you forget to audition people based on their personalities. What I'm saying is, he's not an acquaintance because you want him on your team, he's a guy you have around because you can both benefit each other."

"He's a dick."

"Who's not deaf," Conte shouts.

"Does it look like I give a shit?" I holler at him.

"Conte, be nice to Gerard or I will kill you," Frank says.

"You said you'd only kill me if I cross you," Conte says.

"Insulting Gerard is the ultimate form of crossing me. He means more to me than anything, and I absolutely will kill you if you demean him in anyway, got it?" Frank says in a tone that is threatening as fuck. I know that tone. It's also sexy as fuck.

"You exaggerate," Conte says.

"You want to test me and find out?" Frank says, lifting his head up from my shoulder to look at Conte with a glare that is outmatched only by Medusa herself.

Conte doesn't respond, he just scoffs and opens the fridge.

“Don’t think that I’m letting you off the hook, Conte,” Frank says, “I will not allow you near my family if I can help it. That includes Gerard and Mikey. You’re going to stay here for a few hours until I decide that no one is going to show up out of the blue to murder us. Once I have become confident of that, you’re going to get out of here, and we’re going to find somewhere else.”

“We are?” I ask.

“Yeah, I don’t like it here all that much. This place is too small. We’ll go somewhere else, and this time I’ll take more measures to assure we’re not followed.”

“You think you can just hide until this all stops?” Conte says.

“I think we can try,” Frank answers him, and looks at me, “I would do anything and everything to protect the people I love. If that means hiding away from sick psycho who sends messages through fan mail, then so be it.”

“So that’s how he warned you,” Conte says, nodding like it’s interesting.

“Aha!” Frank shouts like he just won something, “So it is a he.”

Conte looks shocked for a second before the side of his mouth twitches upwards, “I didn’t even know you were searching for that information. Well played.”

“Will you tell me more about him? I might be more willing to trust you if you tell me what you know.”

“What makes you think I care for your trust?”

“Because you lost a finger and you blame me, but at the same time you blame the man who took that from you. Betrayal or not, you don’t want to work with him. You are either here to save yourself or to save your pride, but in either case, the man who took your finger is no friend of yours. I’m not saying you want my trust, but you do want to dish out to me. You want to see what I’ll do. Want to see if I’ll be able to stop him.”

Conte shakes his head and looks at Frank for a minute, “I don’t think this is a game you’re ready to play. This isn’t like that other man, what was his name?”

“Banks,” I say.

“Precisely. This man is not like Banks. He is not rich. He doesn’t hire people to do the dirty work for him, this is about revenge. The ultimate motive. I don’t know who you killed Frank, but this man, he is out for blood because of you,” Conte says.

“It had to happen someday,” Frank says, “I just never thought they’d know who I am. I never thought I’d be putting more than just myself in danger if someone ever did find out either. Gerard was a mistake, but the best one I could’ve made.”

“I don’t think meeting you was a mistake,” I say.

“You’d be dead if you hadn’t met me,” Frank points out. “Or when I first saw you if you’d just walked a little slower, I’d have spread your brains on the sidewalk. What a horrendous thought.”

“I don’t see the tragedy in that,” Conte says.

“You have three strikes, Conte, You’re now down to two. I will take your other finger off, so that you have a matching set.”

“Your threats are empty,” Conte says, and right when he says that is the minute I know he’s gone too far with testing Frank.

I’ve seen Frank do some pretty scary shit when he gets mad. Never to me, but he is not afraid of carrying out a threat to some high caliber. He broke a man’s fingers right in front of me, and that was just the one time I’ve been there to witness it. I don’t want to think of all the other times.

Frank stands up when Conte speaks, and then he walks over to him. The man is standing in the kitchen, still looking arrogant like he thinks Frank is fooling around.

“Don’t test me,” Frank says, “now, we both know you’ve been through hell recently. I’ve been tortured, I know what it’s like. If you think you had it bad with that other man than you’ll be forced to invent a new word when I’m done with you. I will make you bleed, got that?”

“All bark, no bite,” Conte says.

Frank takes a fistful of the guy’s hair and then slams him backward against the fridge.

I can honestly say that I do not like seeing Frank like this, but at the same time I am oddly turned on by seeing him like this. The world works in mysterious ways. I know that a lot of people like bad boys, but I feel like I might’ve crossed a line when I married a guy who shot at me repeatedly.

“You helped me, I thank you for that, but allegiance is a fickle thing. When you sold me out, you lost the right to get away with this apathy. You may still be bitter about me leaving the business, but you will never change me. Remember who owes who the most favors, Conte,” Frank says.

“You think I didn’t pay you back those favors four years ago when your life was in jeopardy?”

“You think you’ll ever be able to compensate what I did for you *five* years ago?” Frank asks, “I never kill without a contract. I made an exception for you back then, and I’m not afraid to make an exception for you now too.”

I don’t know what that means, but it sounds like Conte had Frank kill someone for him. Frank’s also telling the guy that he’ll kill him too. It’s very nice having a guy who can protect you, but also utterly terrifying to see how it is that he protects you.

Conte snickers and says to Frank, “The Enigma isn’t dead at all. I’m looking right at him.”

Frank slams Conte’s head against the refrigerator again, and honestly I don’t blame him on that one. That was pretty low. There’s nothing Frank wishes he could take back more than being The Enigma.

Frank has venom in his eyes when he says, “One more remark like that and trust me, you *will* see The Enigma again.”

Chapter End Notes

Really could you comment? It always makes my day to see comments and I've had a pretty shitty day, so it

would mean a lot.

Picking Things Up

Chapter Summary

I don't know what it is, but I really don't like this chapter.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's four in the morning when Frank starts to shake me awake, and the minute I feel his arms gripping mine with strength and determination, I know something is up. I open my eyes to see Frank staring back at me with this look of complete fear in his eyes and I wrinkle my eyebrows at him. It's too early for this shit, but Frank wouldn't be telling me to get up if it weren't important.

He'd said we would stay here one more night and then find a new location in the morning. The Conte left not long after he'd arrived and there didn't seem to be any indication that Frank thought he would do something last night. He's waking me up now though.

"You have to get up right now, Gerard."

"What?" I ask groggily. My eyes feel crusted over and my body is literally screaming at me to go back to sleep.

"This is not a drill, Gerard. The apartment is on fire."

"The what?" I ask, feeling my body pull into an upright position so fast I get a head rush.

"Up!" he shouts, and then he climbs out of the bed himself.

I see Frank run out of the room, and he starts shouting at Mikey about getting up and I just sit there, trying to figure out how I am where I am right now and what the hell is happening.

“Gerard, get dressed,” Frank says, “both of you, get dressed, put on your best running shoes, and get up!”

Frank starts tearing things apart in the living room and I don’t know what the fuck he’s actually doing, I just know to listen to him. I hurry out of the bed and pull on a pair of sweatpants, then a jacket before I run out into the hall. Funny thing is that I don’t hear any fire alarms so I don’t actually know how Frank knows the apartment is on fire. And then I smell it.

I don’t know where the smell is coming from I just know that I can all of a sudden smell the smoke everywhere. It’s like someone built a campfire and I’ve stepped into the middle of the flames. I gag almost instantly, before coughing and spluttering. Frank comes over to me with his giant gun in his hand and he kicks Mikey’s door open.

“Hurry up!” Frank yells at him.

“What’re we doing?”

“Someone’s trying to draw us out, and they don’t care how many people they kill in the crossfire,” Frank says, “bad thing is that we have to abide.”

“What?”

“We die here, or we make a run for it,” Frank says, “Which sounds better?”

Mikey comes out of his room not a moment later with his glasses askew and a stance about as tired as I feel.

I realize that I don't actually feel as tired as I had a moment ago though, because I can feel the adrenaline pumping through me. It's like I can literally feel the blood moving through my veins, carrying energy to every part of me.

"Shoes. Now," Frank orders, and I evaluate him to see that he's already dressed and has his shoes on. I quickly shove my feet into the only pair I brought with me, and look over at Mikey who looks completely scared.

"Alright, here's what we're going to do," Frank says, and then he coughs into his arm, before continuing to talk like he's not choking on some sort of smoke. "We don't have enough time to plan this immediately, I just need the both of you to stick tight to me. Someone is probably out there waiting with a gun to kill us."

"Who?"

"Who do you think," Frank scathes, "we run out, stay behind me until we start running. Then you get in front of me so I can cover you from behind. We're going to head towards the business part of town. We need cover. If we have time and cover, we're stealing a car. You hear shots fired, you run like your life depends on it, because it does. You listen to me at all times. If I get shot-"

"Frank!" I say disapproving of his pessimism.

"If I get shot," Frank repeats, "You find cover, you get out of the city, you run. You hear me?"

I cough and shake my head slowly, but Frank gives me this glare like he is not messing around and I groan before

nodding. My nod signals to Mikey that he can agree too, so he nods similarly.

"The fire isn't too bad yet, but I could smell that from a mile away," Frank says, "are you ready?"

"Ready to go out there?"

"Yes," Frank says.

"No."

"Okay then," Frank says, and he grabs the doorknob anyway, "let's go."

The apartment we're staying in is on the third floor, and Frank heads immediately for the stairs once we're out of the little space. I can definitely smell and feel the smoke from the fire in my lungs now although I still don't see it. It's more the fumes that tell me what's happening rather than anything else.

Frank hurdles down the stairs two at a time, making me worry if he's going to break an ankle, and I see other people running out of their apartments too, evacuating the building. So at least people are paying attention to the fire alarm rather than ignore it. I hear it now that we're in the hallway but it's faint, like someone's tampered with it. Now that I think about it, it's likely someone *did* tamper with it if this is, in fact, arson.

Frank seems to think this is arson though and I tend to agree with him. Why else would it happen on the same exact day that Conte paid us a little visit? It's all a plan. That traitor. He gave me and Frank up which is just awful. Why would he do that? What kind of a man could sell a person

out when they'd helped them? I don't want to think about that in the slightest actually.

We're out of the building almost so quickly, I barely even feel the difference in the air temperature when we step outside. The weather feels like a sauna, just like the inside of the apartment building had felt. That can't be a good thing, I'd imagine that would aid the fire if anything.

I didn't actually see the source of the fire or anything that would lead you to believe anything was wrong, but I'm no fireman so I don't know how these things work. I just know that I don't want to be in there.

Frank grabs onto my sleeve quite forcefully, because apparently I'd stopped to look back at the building without even realizing it. Now that we're outside I actually can see some of the orange flames billowing out in the windows of some of the apartments. It's not a big fire, but any fire like that is enough.

"No dawdling!" Frank yells, and he pulls me down the street so quick, he might have actually pulled my arm out of its socket. Everyone is paying way too much attention to the fact that their house is on fire to notice that Frank is packing heat. His gun looks bigger than it probably is because Frank's kind of small, but it's intimidating all the same.

There's a loud banging sound that fills the outside area, and I realize with a dropping heart that it's a gunshot. Frank was definitely right. This was absolutely a plot to draw us out. It worked too.

"Run faster!" Frank says, as we hurdle down the street faster than I have ever run.

“You okay?” I ask them both. Mikey has the longest legs and doesn’t seem to hear my question while Frank chooses to ignore it.

I just pant out a groan and continue to run.

There’s the sound of another gun shot, and it makes me flinch painfully, but I don’t stop sprinting behind Frank. I can’t. He falls back only slightly, and pushes me ahead of him until both Mikey and I are running ahead of him. I think he’s using himself as a human shield of some sort to stop either Mikey or I from being shot.

There’s another shot and it only increases the size of the weight I can feel dragging behind me, even though no such thing is there at all. I’ve been shot at a lot in my life. Several more times than most people, as most people are never shot at to begin with. Right now, I remember every single second of panic I’ve ever felt in my life, as the sound of that gun echoes into my brain louder than any sound in the world. I think it might just deafen me, as I’ve never heard anything so loud and treacherous in my life.

When it was Frank shooting at me, that had been so long ago, it seems like a million years. But when it was him, it never really connected that someone wanted me dead. Right now, it’s a billion times worse because they’re not only trying to kill me, they’re trying to hurt Frank and Mikey too. Honestly, I would strangle someone with my own two hands and feel no remorse whatsoever if they so much as pointed a gun at either of them.

Frank makes us turn on the first side street one we come to, around the side of another, even trashier apartment building.

Honestly, I've never been much of a runner. I was never good at things like track, and when we used to have to run laps in gym class, I feigned asthma more than a few times. Right now though, I'm really regretting all those bad grades I got in gym.

I feel the earth pounding under my feet, each footstep sounding like a clap of thunder to my ears. I hear my uneven breathing in my throat which feels like it's closing in on itself. I feel a guttural terror in my stomach like I'm being chased by someone from a horror movie. None of this feels at all real.

Twenty minutes ago I was asleep in bed. I was scared, but at least I was alive with my health and Frank. Right now, I feel like I'm dying or like I'm about to die from a strangers gun and I don't know how to handle that.

I'm making twists and turns whenever Frank tells me to so that we lose whoever shot at us. He tries to tell us that we're probably not even being followed, but that it's worth the extra caution to lose someone if we are.

We're running behind Chinese restaurants, behind boutiques, between apartments, through a long series of alleys that seem even less safe than the scene we're leaving behind, but still, I don't yield. With the hour being so late we don't even see that many people out on the street. There's a few people who are obviously drunk, but very few people give us a second glance. We're just three weirdos running through downtown New York with the sun just starting to peak out behind the skyscrapers up above us.

"Can't keep running," Frank says, and from the sound of his voice, I know he's in a bad shape.

Frank points out a neither fancy nor trashy looking hotel up ahead of us, wedged between two privately owned firms that look like offices of some sort. I don't stop running until we come close enough to the light of the street lamps in front of it for me to see if anyone's behind us.

My brain isn't focusing anymore. We've run several blocks, my heart is beating so far out of my chest, that I think I might have dropped it. Frank looks like he's ready to murder someone again.

"Frank," I splutter, my words sounding strangled from the lack of oxygen in my lungs, "your gun. You can't go in there."

"What?" Frank asks. "Oh, fuck."

"What the hell was that about?" Mikey asks, looking from me to Frank like he thinks we actually have the answers.

"I made a miscalculation," Frank says.

"Miscalculation? Is that what you call being shot at?"

"Don't get mad at him!" I say.

"I'm not, ugh," Mikey groans, "I'm just pissed that this is happening! All my stuff was in that apartment! Or at least all the things I care about."

"Wrong," Frank says. "The things you care about from now on are yourself and Gerard."

"And you," I point out.

"I don't expect Mikey to care about me," Frank shakes his head, "We need to get inside. Quickly."

"You have a gigantic gun, you can't just check into a hotel with that thing behind your back!" Mikey says.

"Then one of you goes to check us in, and you do it quickly," Frank says, pulling off his sweatshirt and wrapping it around the gun. "I can get it through there quickly, I just can't check in myself."

"So this is all happening?" I ask, my head feeling dizzy, "We actually are like running for our lives from a gunman who just set everything we owned on fire?"

"Doesn't feel real," Frank says, "but we need to get fucking inside, so someone for the love of god, check us in!"

Mikey nods and makes his way to the door, while Frank grabs my hand and starts to drag me into the shadows under the streetlight that hide a person from view.

None of this can actually be happening. I don't get it. It's just not real. It can't be. I feel like I'm in a really bad action movie or something. This is all so sick, and not in the good way.

"Frank," Mikey says before stepping into the hotel, "I don't want you to believe I don't care about you."

Frank smiles lightly, a smile that doesn't quite reach his eyes, and it doesn't sit well how little Frank thinks of himself after hearing it. I know a lot of the mechanics of the way Frank's brain works. He still believes himself to be a murderer, and there's nothing I can say to get him not to think that.

Honestly, I believe Frank's a good person. I know with certainty that if Frank hadn't killed all those people he did,

they'd be dead anyway. Frank isn't a bad person. It was just his job, it's not who he is.

A lot of the times people try to tell him that he's important or that they appreciate him, it flies right over Frank's head because he refuses to believe it. He truly doesn't understand how important he is to people. Not even me, he doesn't know.

Frank thinks he's selfish. He thinks he's selfish for staying with me, like it's a fight he's been losing ever since he came to my apartment almost five years ago and admitted to liking me. He's believed that he's been taking advantage of his love for me, and that the way I feel for him isn't parallel. He's wrong of course, I love him just as much, if not more than he loves me, but a long career like that of his past has morphed and twisted the way he sees things. But I fucking love this man more than words can say.

Frank looks at me with his big brown doe eyes, and he says softly and indirectly, "Thanks, Mikey."

Chapter End Notes

I know this took so long and I honestly feel so bad about it. I've just had this really emotionally stunting fear that I've lost everyone's interest in this story or that I've jumped the shark and it's made it impossible to write this, so I'm sorry it took so long.

Don't Be An Asshole

Chapter Summary

Frank is both a dumbass and an asshole.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Gerard, I’m so sorry about all of this,” Frank says the instant we step into the hotel room. It smells like a hotel room, like stale air and clean linens, but I honestly hate it. I can’t stand the way everything seems so boring. There’s one of those closet sized bathrooms with the oddly yellow lighting tucked away in the corner next to the door, and those ugly starch stiff beds with ugly patterns against the wall. The air conditioner is already turned on and making a canned sound like a tin can hitting against something hard.

“It’s not your fault, Frank,” I say. Mikey walks over to the bed next to the air conditioner, and he lounges across it like he’s about to pass out. He kind of looks like he’s about to do snow angels, except he is way too exhausted to move even his limbs.

“No, Frank, you’re not the one who burned the building down. That was really very rude. Who sets things on fire? Rude,” Mikey states.

“Whoever this guy is, he’s a psychopath,” I say, and Mikey nods.

“No, he’s justified,” Frank says.

“What?” I ask, looking at him.

“Gerard, think about it. Whoever this person is that’s trying to kill us, it’s almost definitely my fault. Who am I kidding, it *is* my fault.”

“No it’s not,” Mikey says, pulling himself up into a sitting position, and looking at Frank with a raised eyebrow.

“Well this person wants revenge. I don’t even blame them! I probably killed someone they loved. I might have killed their daughter, son, brother, wife or whoever else. I killed that person, and it’s completely fair that they’d want me dead. I’d want me dead.”

“Uh, well, I think they kind of want me dead too,” I say, “I mean, why else would they have been victimizing me and sending me all the signs?”

“Well it’s to get back at me, isn’t it? You’re the love of my life, and I shot whoever this guy loved, so they’re going to kill you because they know it’d hurt me more to lose you than to die. And oh god are they right. They’re so unbelievably right it’s not even fathomable. I couldn’t live without you! And if Mikey got hurt because of me, I don’t even know what I’d do. You two are the best things in my life. You’re the only people I care about. You’re it! I don’t have anyone else, and without you, my life would be miserable.”

“That doesn’t make any of this your fault,” Mikey says, “like c’mon, I got angry at this guy who stood in front of me in line and bought the last blueberry muffin, but I ain’t looking for his head on a pike.”

“I think murder is a little different then muffins, Mikes,” Frank says, critically.

“You can blame yourself all you want, but that doesn’t make it any truer. I could tell you that I believe trees are just giant broccoli but that doesn’t automatically define it as being the truth.”

“It’s just... you know, I thought, I honestly thought, that all the shit I put us through last time would be over. I thought that I’d finally gotten you two safe, and I thought putting my past behind me could be possible. I just thought that hey, maybe I could be happy and make someone’s life a little better, and that maybe everything would work out. Maybe I wouldn’t end up being dragged away by the cops and put away forever. I just thought that it could all finally be over, but I’m so fucking stupid,” Frank says.

“You’re not stupid,” I say.

“Yeah, I fucking am. I’ve ruined your life once again. First I don’t believe you when you tell me we’re going to be killed and then I almost kill us again. I can’t believe this is all happening.”

“Well, it is and you’re here, I’m here, Mikey’s here, so I guess you’re just going to have to suck it up, aren’t you?”

“What do you mean?” Frank asks.

“I mean that you blaming yourself is exactly what happened last time. You remember, of course you do, you were going to ruin my fucking life when you just had to be all high and mighty, telling me that you couldn’t live without me and all that other bullshit, and I thought you were being overly altruistic back then, and you’re doing it again. Frank, fuck being selfless, okay? I know I’m not supposed to say this, I know it’s not the politically correct thing to say, and I know I’m a bad person for admitting to it, but I’d rather anyone in the world died as long as it wasn’t you or Mikey. If I had to

choose between everyone on this entire planet dying but saving you, or the opposite, I would save you. I don't care, okay? I know how bad that sounds, but like, fuck it, I'm selfish!"

"Gerard-" Frank starts.

"No, Frank, I don't give a fuck. I would let someone else die if it meant you stayed alive, and I know that sounds wrong, but if I said otherwise I'd be lying, so yeah, I'm glad you're alive right now. I'm glad we're together right now. I'm happy that you were a fucking assassin and that's how we got here, because I don't care! I know people are dead, but me feeling bad about it isn't going to get them to rise from their graves. It's not! Okay? They're dead, so, you know what, I feel bad for their families, I really do, it's a bummer that they're dead, but all you ever did, all you ever did to them was your job. They'd be dead anyway, and you very well might've been too. Frank, the point is that this is not your fault," I say, looking at him.

Mikey's looking at the two of us uncomfortably and I know he's wishing there was more than one room in this hotel room right about now. There's only a bathroom and that probably wouldn't be any less awkward a place to hide because I know he'd still be able to hear us, but sometimes people get angry and there's really nothing that can be done about that.

"It is my fault, Gerard," Frank says.

"No, you know whose fault it is? It's Banks. It's him, and it's all those other stuffy rich guys who can't solve their problems without murdering people. You never did a fucking thing wrong, okay? The people you killed were dead before you got to them. Their graves had been dug, the x's

on those people's backs were there whether it was you doing the killing or not, and you should be able to accept that. Frank, you never killed anyone out of malice, and that's what makes you a good person."

"But I pulled the trigger," Frank says. "I pulled the trigger. I never went to the police with the information I had. I knew those people would die, I had the knowledge of a crime, and I never reported a damn thing. I took people's money. I let them use me as a killing machine for some bits of paper."

"There are people who work for prisons and they've had to kill people on death row, but we never blame them for being murderers do we? They are the same as you. You're no different from a guy who gives a prisoner a lethal injection."

Frank shakes his head, "it's different, we both know it is."

"No it's not!" I shout, angrily.

"Calm down the both of you!" Mikey interrupts. Excuse me, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but someone tried to burn us alive tonight, and then shot at us, so you know what, the moral implications of what's happened in the past that can't be taken back, do not concern me, or you, or anybody right now. It's not something I really give a shit about. Those people you killed Frank, they're dead. I have to agree with Gee there, because they *are* dead. They are not coming back. You feeling guilty about it changes nothing. Nothing at all!"

"You don't understand," Frank sighs, walking over to one of the beds and sitting down, putting his face in his hands.

"You have no idea what it feels like to know that you're a bad person. It's like this thing in your gut, that keeps twisting and burning at your core, and it hurts. It feels like hell. I look in the mirror, and I see a murderer. I hear my

own voice, I hear a murderer. I've killed people, and I know that regretting that doesn't change what's been done, but it sure as hell doesn't help any to realize I can't take it back. Like, congratulations, you're able to understand the progression of time and our inability to reset it. Thanks for telling me that I can't change the past, because I'm a complete nimrod who was unable to understand it any other way! That's a real big load off my shoulders. But wait, you know what? Fuck that. You've changed nothing. I am still a murderer. I do not care, I do not even slightly care what you think, or how you feel I should be thinking, because that is not the way that I do feel. It's not the way that I actually process these things."

"Frank," I start, "there is nothing we can do to change your mind, and in the end, there is nothing about either of our opinions that have any more right to be heard than the way you, yourself, think, but the thing is, I want you to know how I feel. How I feel is not, I understand, as important as how *you* feel, because it's your weight to bear, not mine, but the thing is, I don't view you as a bad person."

"But-"

"Frank, I'm your husband, and I'm saying this because I love you, if you say one more bad thing about yourself, I will punch you in the fucking face."

"And I will also," Mikey says, raising his hand.

"I don't think telling me that you want to punch me in the face is really a sign of love," Frank says, puzzling his face to look at me.

"Yeah well, you're pissing me off," Gerard says.

“So the guy who you are in love with is pissing you off, and that’s why you want to punch him? You have a skewed sense of logic,” Frank says.

“The point I’m trying to make is that you’re being an asshole. I always tell you not to be an asshole to people, okay, and when we have kids, imma tell them not to be an asshole to people, and when Mikey gets arrested someday for crimes yet unknown that will probably involve something to do with cutting off peoples appendages, I’m going to say the same thing to him. Don’t be an asshole to people! It’s not that hard, but Frank, here’s something you may not have known. You’re a people. Frank, you’re someone who exists. Just because you are yourself, that does not give you any right to be an asshole to yourself. Don’t even try to tell me that ‘it’s different,’ because it’s not. You’re a person, you shouldn’t be an asshole, don’t be an asshole to yourself.”

“You said asshole quite a bit there,” Mikey notes.

“I did,” I nod, “And one more thing, Frank. What makes you think you have any right to say that what happened last time was your fault? No offense, but I don’t think you were the one who had multiple assassins hired to kill him. Saying it was your fault is like saying it’s because of Mikey that we landed on the moon in 1969. You were there, yes, but the events that transpired would’ve transpired whether or not you were there. Actually, without you there, I’d probably be dead.”

“You’re too defensive of me,” Frank says, “all these pretty words don’t excuse what I’ve done.”

“Fine,” I say, giving up on him. I walk over to sit next to him on the bed. Frank looks at me for a second before frowning

and turning away.

"It's almost like he thinks we don't care about him," Mikey says, and I turn to look at him, because he's right about that one. "If we didn't care about him, then why would we be here right now? I don't know about you, but if I hated Frank the way he seems to think I do, I'd have shoved him outside and tied him to a flagpole so as to assure that whoever wants him dead would get their chance. But whatever. If he thinks I hate him, that I don't care about him, so be it. I knew he was a dumbass the minute I first saw him. Hell, I knew he was a dumbass the day you first met him and called me to gush about the cute reporter guy who was writing a story about you. Because, seriously, what kind of a dumbass wants to write a story about *you*? You're about as boring as they come."

"I am, aren't I?" I say, nodding in agreement. "I'm vanilla as they come, and my idea of a good time is Mario Kart and popcorn"

"I don't think you hate me per se," Frank says, "I just don't believe that you're thinking logically when you say you care."

I roll my eyes, and look at him, "Look, I love you. I don't have a choice. I married you, stupid of me, I know, but divorces are messy and you look good naked, so fuck it, I'm going to keep you. But honestly, I have to say, of the smart people I know, and I do know quite a few smart people, you, Frank, are the dumbest smart person I know."

"That was an oxymoron," Frank says.

"*You're* a moron," I reply.

"Both of you are morons," Mikey interjects.

"I just... think what you want to. I can't change the way your brain works, that's up to you, it's your brain. But, I just want to tell you that I think you are amazing. I really do. So, do with that information what you will, but the thing that needs to be said is that no matter what happens, I'm always going to root for you."

Frank sighs, looks at me and, though his face is basically blank, he does smile the tiniest bit. "I love you, Gee."

"I know," I shrug, "it's 'cause I'm awesome."

"And you're conceited," Frank adds.

"Maybe I am, but you're stuck in the same boat as me. Dumb marriage vows and all that."

"Yeah, shut up, just kiss me," Frank rolls his eyes.

"Bossy," I smile, because I think I've managed to cheer him up a little bit. Frank's never an easy one to snap out of things because he gets so focused on one vantage point that he can't think about other ones. He's bad at pulling himself out of a slump as well. I think he needs people surrounding him to even justify his own existence, because otherwise he thinks he's failed. I disagree, I think Frank's the best person in the world without even having to try. He'd be the best person in the world even after twenty years stranded on a desert island alone with only a shrub to talk to.

You can say what you want about being with someone for a long time. Five years doesn't seem like that much to me, but I guess it is. One thing that never gets old though, is kissing them. At least for me, it's like our first every single time. I psych myself into thinking that I know what it feels like, remember what it's like to kiss Frank, but every time I find that I'm way off the mark. He's never going to stop

astounding me. He never gives himself credit for how fantastic he really is. It's annoying that the best people in this world are always the ones who have the hardest time recognizing their strengths. Falling in love with someone usually involves the process of falling in love with their flaws even more than strengths, but with Frank, it's everything. Everything is what I love about him.

I love the way he wears T-shirts everywhere, and I love the way he'd rather talk about nothing or something stupid then let an awkward silence overtake a conversation. I love the way he makes up songs when he's cooking that are usually about something stupid like the way that zucchini sizzles in a frying pan. I love the way that Frank will literally stop talking in the middle of a word if he sees a dog, and will then watch that dog in complete silence until it's out of his line of sight completely. I love the way he always buys movies that he enjoyed after watching them on Netflix, because he likes the satisfaction of owning a physical copy. I love the way he always looks for a specific edition of his favorite book in every used book store we've ever been in, and I love the way he always guesses Kenya whenever we watch a quiz show that has a question about African countries. I love the way he gets sucked into Big Brother even though, every year, he promises he won't watch it. I just love him.

Mikey makes a gagging sound, "I am right here. You two are nasty, I don't wanna see that."

"All I did was kiss him, Mikey! Since when was that new to you?"

"Gerard is gross. No one wants to kiss Gerard," Mikey says.

"Frank wants to kiss me," I pout, "I'm adorable."

“You just keep telling yourself that.”

“You’re adorable, don’t worry,” Frank says.

“I love you so much,” I reply.

“And I love Cocoa Puffs but I don’t announce it three times an hour, do I?” Mikey says loudly.

“Don’t listen to him,” I roll my eyes, “he’s just jealous that I have someone to say I love you to.”

“As well he should be.”

“Oh shut up,” Mikey shakes his head.

“Fuck you,” I say, turning back to Frank and kissing him.

Chapter End Notes

Haha, this took way too long and if you're reading this you probably want to hurt me.

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